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LETTERS

ON THE

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

OF

EDUCATION.

BY

ELIZABETH HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE MEMOIRS OF MODERN PHILOSOPHERS, &c

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LETTER

LETTER I.

On the Necessity of obtaining a Knowledge of the Intellectual Faculties, in order to their proper Cultivation.—How this Knowledge is to be acquired.—Futility of endeavouring to cultivate the Faculties out of the Order prescribed by Nature.—A short Analysis of the Plan to be pursued.—Reflections.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING endeavoured to point out the neceſſity of paying an early and unremitting attention to the active powers of the human mind, it now remains for me to attempt an examination of the principles upon which we ought to proceed in the Improvement of the Intellectual Faculties. If we admit, as a fundamental principle, *that the true end of education is to bring*

all the powers and faculties of our nature to the higheſt perfection of which they are capable; it evidently follows, that an adequate knowledge of theſe powers and faculties is abſolutely neceſſary towards the accompliſhment of the end we have in view. The diffuſion of this ſpecies of knowledge would doubtleſs correct many errors, both in theory and practice; and did it once become general among thoſe with whom the firſt years of life are commonly ſpent, would produce conſequences of the utmoſt importance to ſociety.

But where are we to ſearch for this deſirable information? Muſt we turn to the voluminous works of philoſophers, and there ſeek for this hidden treaſure, amid all the rubbiſh of conjecture and hypotheſis? Such a taſk would be, to the generality of our ſex, impoſſible: nor were it poſſible, would it probably be attended with much advantage.

To explore the nature of the human mind is, indeed, the proper object of metaphyſical enquiry; but few philoſophers have

been at ſufficient pains to diſcriminate and aſcertain the different degrees of certainty that attend their diſcoveries. With all that is ſpeculative or conjectural upon this ſubject we have properly no concern; but happily for us, we may derive an adequate knowledge of all that is true and certain, by means of reflection and obſervation.

"We take it for granted," ſays the venerable Reid, "that, by attentive reflection, a man may gain a clear and certain knowledge of the operations of his own mind; a knowledge no leſs clear and certain than that which he has of an external object, when it is ſet before his eyes. Another ſource of information upon this ſubject is a due attention to the courſe of human actions and conduct. The actions of men are effects; their ſentiments, their paſſions, and their affections, are cauſes of thoſe effects; and we may, in many caſes, form a judgment of the cauſe from the effect. Not only the actions, but even the opinions, of men, may ſometimes

give

give light into the frame of the human mind. The opinions of men may be conſidered as the effects of their intellectual powers, as their actions are the effects of their active principles. Even the prejudices and errors of mankind, when they are general, muſt have ſome cauſe no leſs general; the diſcovery of which will throw ſome light upon the frame of the human underſtanding."

Fortified by ſuch authority, I need not ſcruple to aver, that by reflection upon the operations of our own minds, and attentive obſervation of the conduct and opinions of others, we may attain all the information that is abſolutely requiſite for us upon the ſubject in queſtion; and that the greateſt advantage to be derived from the diſquiſitions of the learned is the leading our minds to a more attentive reflection and obſervation than we might otherwiſe be inclined to beſtow. "The underſtanding," as Mr. Locke beautifully obſerves,

ſerves, "like the eye, whilſt it makes us ſee and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itſelf; and it requires art and pains to ſet it at a diſtance, and make it its own object." This "art and pains" are implied in ſerious reflection; and to this reflection it is the object of theſe volumes to to call the guardians of the riſing generation.

Let it not be imagined, that I mean to engage my ſex in the nice ſubtleties of logic or metaphyſics. It is not for the purpoſe of exerciſing their minds in uſeleſs ſpeculation, that I exhort them to the ſpecies of inquiry alluded to; but it is to enable them to diſcharge, with fidelity and honour, the momentous duties to which Providence has been pleaſed to call them.

Parents are the agents of the Moſt High in extending the bleſſing of exiſtence. But in giving life to a new race of beings is their agency at an end? Ought they not ſtill to conſider themſelves as the inſtruments of the Deity, employed by Him to

train

train up a certain portion of his rational offspring to a capacity for the enjoyment of that felicity which he has prepared for thoſe who love him? In all that we know of his decrees, we behold a proviſion for the gradual improvement, and final perfection of the human race. In this beneficent plan parents have the privilege of co-operating. Glorious privilege! Who that had a ſenſe of its importance would ſacrifice it at the ſhrine of vanity, or relinquiſh it at the ſuggeſtion of ſelfiſh indolence?

To mothers is entruſted the care of rational beings in the moſt important period of their exiſtence; the ſprings of human conduct are in their hands. From them muſt the naſcent paſſions and affections of the heart receive their direction; by them muſt the germ of intellect be taught to expand; by them muſt the foundation be laid of all that is great, and good, and admirable, in human character. Theſe are the important privileges by which our ſex is honoured; theſe

theſe are the duties to which it is called. Let not aſſiſtance towards the due performance of them be deſpiſed, however humble the hand that offers it.

In entering upon the cultivation of the underſtanding, it is neceſſary to premiſe, that I do not intend to preſcribe any particular courſe of ſtudy, or to point out the beſt methods of inſtruction in any branch of learning or of ſcience. To thoſe, therefore, who confine their views ſolely to the acquirement of this or that accompliſhment, my obſervations will neceſſarily appear dull and unintereſting, becauſe totally deſtitute of rules that may facilitate the attainment of their particular object.

It is obſerved by an authority to which I am always proud to refer, that "to inſtruct youth in the languages and in the ſciences is comparatively of little importance, if we are inattentive to the habits they acquire; and are not careful in giving to all the different faculties, and all their different principles

principles of action, a proper degree of employment. Abſtracting entirely from the culture of their moral powers, how extenſive and difficult is the buſineſs of conducting their intellectual improvement! To watch over the aſſociations which they form in their tender years; to give them early habits of mental activity; to rouſe their curioſity, and to direct it to proper objects; to exerciſe their ingenuity and invention; to cultivate in their minds a turn for ſpeculation, and at the ſame time preſerve their attention alive to objects around them; to awaken their attention to the beauties of nature, and to inſpire them with a reliſh for intellectual enjoyment; theſe form *but a part* of the buſineſs of education, and yet the execution even of this part requires an acquaintance with the general principles of our nature, which ſeldom falls to the ſhare of thoſe to whom the inſtruction of youth is commonly entruſted."*

* Elements of the Philoſophy of the Human Mind, p. 24.

The ſketch that is here drawn by a maſterly hand will better explain to you my notions upon the ſubject of intellectual improvement than the moſt laboured definition. Still I muſt agree with the enlightened author, that theſe particulars form but a part of the buſineſs of education: They are but a few of the neceſſary means that muſt be employed in accompliſhing our great end.

To qualify a human being for the true enjoyment of exiſtence, the higheſt cultivation of the intellectual powers will not be ſufficient, unleſs theſe powers be properly directed; this direction they muſt receive from the bias that has been given to the deſires and affections of the heart. If theſe deſires and affections have been corrupted by improper indulgence, or perverted and depraved by means of powerful impreſſions made upon the tender mind, we may give our children knowledge, we may give them learning, we may give them

them accompliſhments, but we ſhall never be able to teach them to applytheſe acquirements to juſt or noble purpoſes.

To explain and to urge the importance of giving ſuch a direction to the active powers of the mind, as is agreeable to the precepts of divine philoſophy, was the particular object of my firſt Series of Letters. But though my view was there chiefly directed towards the culture of the heart, it was impoſſible ſo entirely to ſeparate ſubjects in themſelves united, as not to blend my ideas of the early cultivation of the mental powers with what I advanced on the cultivation of the affections. The ſubjects, indeed, ought never to be conſidered as ſeparate and diſtinct; though, from our limited powers, it is neceſſary, in works of this nature, to view them in ſucceſſion.

That the greateſt perfection of which our nature is ſuſceptible, conſiſts in the capability of exerting, in an eminent degree, not one or two of the faculties with which

Providence

Providence has endowed us, BUT THE WHOLE OF THESE FACULTIES; and of having the direction given to this exertion, under the conſtant influence of the pious and benevolent affections; I believe few will be inclined to deny. This is the perfection after which we ought inceſſantly to labour; of this perfection it has pleaſed the Deity to give us an example, in Him, who, in compaſſion to our infirmities, *took not on him the nature of Angels*, that is to ſay, gave us not an example of perfection beyond the graſp of our preſent faculties to conceive, or of our preſent powers to imitate.

In the character of our bleſſed Saviour we behold the union of the intellectual and moral powers of man in their moſt exalted ſtate of perfection; nor is it doing juſtice either to his example or his precepts, to keep our eye fixed upon one part of the character, while we neglect the other. His precepts and example are never at variance; while he taught the neceſſity and advantage

vantage of improving every talent with which Heaven has entruſted us, he diſplayed every faculty of the human mind exerted in the cauſe of piety and virtue. To give our children ſuch a partial and imperfect education, as ſhall render them inclined to bury their talents in the earth, is to act directly contrary to the commands of Him, who gives them with an expreſs injunction that they may be occupied.

As the body is compoſed of a variety of organs, of which each is equally neceſſary to the well-being of the whole; ſo the mind is a compound, if I may ſo ſpeak, of a variety of faculties, none of which can be defective, without enfeebling or injuring the reſt. The lungs are not more neceſſary to the functions of the heart, than accurate conception to ſound judgment. The circulation of the blood is not more neceſſary to the animal economy, than memory is to the mental. But memory depends upon attention; the accuracy of conception has the

the ſame ſource: and if both are not duly exerciſed by means of the perceptions, neither will attain perfection.

Where any one of the faculties has obtained a manifeſt aſcendancy, the character will be imperfect, unhappy in itſelf, and uſeleſs to ſociety. This irregular ſhoot is ſometimes dignified by ignorance with the name of *genius*; but genius is not the partial vigour of a ſingle faculty. It implies the poſſeſſion of all the powers of the mind in an eminent degree. The new combinations which genius produces, either in literature or in the arts, are the production of vigorous conception and ſound judgment; aided by the creative power of imagination, and modelled by taſte. Where any of theſe appear to be wanting, the inventions of genius muſt be proportionally defective. To ſuppoſe that genius can exiſt without them, is abſurd.

The ſame want of reflection leads into other errors, which are frequent cauſes of diſappointment.

diſappointment. In the preſent ſtate of refinement, the cultivation of Taſte is an object of much importance: in the education of young ladies, it indeed often appears to be the only object that is deemed worthy of attention. To aſcertain the beſt and moſt certain method of cultivating this faculty will, therefore, I doubt not, be conſidered as a very deſirable object. If theſe Letters are read with attention, I hope the diſcovery will be made. I do not deſpair of convincing the moſt incredulous, of the utter impoſſibility of cultivating Taſte, without the previous cultivation of the leading faculties. It is here, however, neceſſary to premiſe, that by Taſte, wherever the word occurs, I invariably mean that faculty of the mind, whereby we are enabled to *perceive*, and to *feel*, whatever is beautiful or ſublime in Nature or in the Arts. It is neceſſary to give this definition, becauſe the term is often applied to denote *predilection*; and this application of it has given riſe to much confuſion,

not

not only in colloquial language, but in the writings of ſome ingenious authors. A predilection for muſic or painting may be acquired by means of habit and of aſſociation; but theſe are inadequate to the production of the *emotions of Taſte*, which have their origin in other ſources. All animals that have nice perceptions, are capable of acquiring a predilection for certain ſounds or colours; but the emotions of Taſte are peculiar to the human race, and even in man are confined to the circle of the cultivated.

The ſame faculties which muſt unite their operations, in order to render the mind ſuſceptible of the emotions of ſublimity or beauty, are equally neceſſary to the imagination. An early and partial cultivation of this faculty is an evil pregnant with ſo much miſchief, that it cannot be too ſeverely deprecated. To it are we indebted for thoſe thouſand extravagancies in opinion and in conduct, which extort the pity of the wiſe, and the cenſures of the

the ſevere. To it we owe the motley abſurdities, which, under the name of Novels, deprave the taſte, and corrupt the affections, of the youthful heart; and in the early incitement that is given to the imagination, while the powers of conception and judgment are ſuffered to lie dormant, we ſee the reaſon why ſuch books are read with avidity and delight. A predilection for the wild and extravagant muſt be the inevitable conſequence of introducing trains of thought, made up of unnatural combinations, at a period when the mind has obtained few accurate ideas, and the judgment has been but little exerciſed.

The imagination that is not regulated by judgment, is pernicious in exact proportion to its ſtrength. It preſents to the mind's eye a falſe glaſs, through which no object is ſeen in its natural ſize and juſt proportion. All is diſtorted; though, by the glare of falſe colouring, the deformity eſcapes detection. Thus, by injudicious management,

is

is that faculty which, under proper regulation, is the ornament and bleſſing of our preſent ſtate, converted into a ſource of error and deluſion. Thus what was intended for our happineſs is rendered productive of miſery, and confuſion is introduced into the works of GOD!

Nor is the partial cultivation of the faculties confined to taſte and imagination. Upon a ſtrict inveſtigation of this important ſubject, I am afraid we ſhould find, that it is no uncommon thing to attempt the cultivation of the reaſoning faculty, without having paid any regard to the culture of thoſe by which, in the order of nature, it is preceded. Have we no abſtract reaſoners who ſhew a deficiency in judgment? No metaphyſicians who betray the abſence of that common ſenſe which has ſound judgment for its baſis? Is it not to the neglect of the judging faculty, that we muſt attribute the favourable reception which the crude dreams of ſpeculative viſionaries

meet with from the young? How ſhould they detect ſophiſtry, whoſe minds have never been exerciſed on truth?

Where the judgment has not been duly cultivated, it is in vain that we endeavour to lead the mind to general reaſoning; on ſuch minds the ſciences, that afford the moſt powerful aid to the faculty of abſtraction, are loſt. Thoſe who know what aſſiſtance is to be derived from a knowledge of mathematics in this particular, are apt to envy ſuch as have been favoured with opportunities of making this acquirement. But on what numbers is this uſeful branch of ſcience totally thrown away! By how few is it made uſe of as a means of further improvement! Without the cultivation of judgment, the means will ever be reſted in as the end. The knowledge of various languages opens a rich and inexhauſtible mine to the cultivated underſtanding; but if judgment does not lend its aſſiſtance, the ore will never be extracted. While we devote

devote the moſt precious years of life to the ſtudy of languages, it is ſurely proper to take ſome precautions againſt the poſſibility of ſo much pains proving utterly abortive. Let it be remembered, that to be able to conſtrue Greek and Latin is one thing, and to be inſpired with a taſte for claſſical literature is another. The firſt you will perhaps ſay, is ſufficient to qualify your ſons for the profeſſions to which you deſtine them. But who, in any profeſſion, ever roſe to diſtinguiſhed eminence without taſte and judgment?

Is a taſte for claſſical literature acknowledged to be an accompliſhment worthy of a gentleman? Do not flatter yourſelf that it will ever be acquired, without accuracy of conception, and ſoundneſs of judgment. Nor will theſe be ſufficient, if pains be not at the ſame time taken, to fix ſuch aſſociations as may introduce habits of thinking favourable to the cultivation of ſentiment. How much this is attended to at great ſeminaries,

minaries, I leave it to parents to enquire. Let them reflect on the nature of the human mind, and conſider which of its faculties are likely to receive improvement, where hundreds of bad and good are promiſcuouſly mingled. Where the time of boys is ſo entirely at their own diſpoſal, that of the four-and twenty hours but two or three at the utmoſt are ſpent under the maſter's eye; of the remainder, when we deduct what is employed in the important buſineſs of purveying, in quarreling, and in play, we ſhall find little left for the purpoſes of voluntary improvement. But unleſs much previous pains have been beſtowed, how can we expect that boys completely left to their own diſpoſal, goaded to idleneſs and diſſipation by example, incited by the ſame means to ſenſual gratification, and deſtitute of guide or monitor, ſhould voluntarily betake themſelves to improvement? Such inſtances are, I believe, ſufficiently rare; and wherever they occur,

we may be aſſured that the foundation had been laid at home. Where this is wanting, all that can, from the nature of things, be acquired at ſchool, is merely a verbal knowledge of the languages. The mind will not certainly at this active ſeaſon remain ſtationary: it will be ſharpened by ſuſpicion; its ſagacity will be called forth by ſelfiſhneſs; and the experience of fraud, deceit, and perfidy, will give a premature exiſtence to the feelings of indignation, jealouſy, and revenge. It is therefore evident, that where boys are to be ſent to great ſchools, an uncommon degree of previous pains is neceſſary, in order to ſecure them from all the fatal conſequences of ſuch a plunge, and to enable them to reap all the benefit which ſuch inſtitutions are calculated to produce.

If, in analyſing the faculties of the human mind, we find that Providence has made a manifeſt diſtinction betwixt the ſexes, by leaving the female ſoul deſtitute of

of any of the intellectual powers, it will become us to ſubmit to the divine deciſion. But if, upon enquiry, we find that no ſuch partiality has been ſhewn by Heaven; it is incumbent upon us to conſider, by what right we take upon us to deſpiſe the gift of God! When we neglect the cultivation of the faculties which He has ſo graciouſly beſtowed, can we flatter ourſelves that we act in concert with our Almighty Father? Let us examine the mode of education adopted at our great boarding-ſchools, and ſay which of the faculties of the ſoul it has a tendency to improve? Let us reflect on the manner in which education is too often conducted at home, and pronounce how far it is calculated to bring to perfection thoſe high intellectual endowments with which Heaven has entruſted us? Could it be proved, that the rational faculties are indeed uſeleſs to the ſex; and that the duties to which they are called, as intelligent and accountable beings, as daughters, ſiſ-

ters,

ters, wives, mothers, and members of ſociety, could be equally well performed by means of thoſe powers which they have in common with the brute creation; then might the higher faculties of the ſoul be neglected with impunity.

To the wretched beings who are deſtined to be ſhut up in the zenanas of Eaſtern deſpots, reaſon would be not only an uſeleſs, but a cruel gift. The accompliſhments, however ſuperficial, which can help to amuſe the liſtleſs hours of hopeleſs captivity, ought by them to be prized as a reſource from wretchedneſs. Conſidering themſelves in no higher light than as mere objects of ſenſual appetite, it is to this point that their whole endeavours will neceſſarily be directed.

" Bred only and completed to the taſte
" Of fretful appetence—to ſing, to dance,
" To dreſs, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye—
" Yet empty of all good, wherein conſiſts
" Woman's domeſtic honour and chief praiſe."*

* Milton.

Such education, to women ſo deſtined, is perfectly appropriate; and the ſole inconſiſtency which we can detect in the Eaſtern ſyſtem, is in permitting their ſons, as well as daughters, to paſs the moſt important period of youth under the tuition of ſuch degraded beings. By them are the ſeeds of moral depravity effectually ſown; and ſloth, and ignorance, and pride, and ſelf-importance, with every ſpecies of corruption, become the inheritance of the children committed to their care. Such are the conſequences that muſt neceſſarily follow, when thoſe who are deſtined to inſtruct others are themſelves deſtitute of inſtruction!

Where the chief aim in education is directed to any other point than the improvement of the intellectual and moral powers, an artificial character will be produced, which, neither guided by reaſon, nor inſpired by any noble or generous ſentiment, will be the mere puppet of opinion, and the

the creature of imitation. But if imitation is made to ſupply the uſe of reaſon, is it probable, that the early aſſociations will be ſuch as to lead the mind to chuſe the brighteſt patterns of virtue? Alas! experience has fully proved the contrary. Experience ſhews us daily examples of the fatal conſequences of carrying the ſyſtem of *zenana* education into practice, in a country where women are called to act an important part on the theatre of ſociety. Without intellect there can be no principle, and without principle there can be no ſecurity for virtue.

In order to cultivate the intellectual faculties to advantage, it appears to me, that we ought to accompany Nature in her progreſs; and as ſhe gradually unfolds the powers of the mind, that we ſhould devote ourſelves to the improvement of each faculty, in the order it is by her preſented.

Aſſuming this as a principle, I ſhall proceed in the following Letters to examine, in the firſt place, the faculty of PERCEPTION,

TION; ſhewing the advantages that are to be derived from its aſſiduous cultivation, and the very great diſadvantages that accrue from its neglect.

ATTENTION is the next ſubject that will naturally fall under our conſideration. I ſhall be at ſome pains to illuſtrate its importance; and ſhall not ſcruple to advance upon it arguments which appear convincing to my own mind, though they are unſupported by the authority of others. If they are founded in truth, they will ſtand the teſt of inveſtigation; if otherwiſe, I ſhould be ſorry to protract their fall.

CONCEPTION is the next faculty brought forth by Nature. By conception, I mean the ideas which we form of abſent objects of ſenſe, or of our paſt ſenſations. So much depends upon the vigour of this faculty, that I cannot be at too much pains to inculcate the neceſſity of its being cultivated with never-ceaſing vigilance. I ſhall, therefore, do all in my power to urge the

the careful cultivation of this faculty, by an explanation of the important conſequences to which it leads; and ſhall give you ſuch hints with reſpect to its improvement, as, I hope, may be found of uſe to thoſe who are concerned in the practical part of education.

The faculty of JUDGMENT is the next that will demand our attention. I ſhall trace its progreſs from its firſt dawn in the infant mind to its maturity; and though conſcious that my abilities are inadequate to the magnitude of my ſubject, I ſhall do what in me lies to enforce its importance. To the neglect of this faculty, all the follies, and many of the vices, which abound among us, may be fairly traced. Where the judgment is ſound and unperverted, the unruly deſires and affections will not revel without control; but in order to the cultivation of ſound judgment, it is not only neceſſary that the affections be uncorrupted, but that they be *early engaged on the ſide of truth.*

Having

Having dwelt at large on the cultivation of Judgment, we ſhall then proceed to an examination of the faculty of ABSTRACTION. This faculty, though common to all, and ſuſceptible of great improvement, is ſeldom cultivated to any perfection, but by the few whoſe courſe of ſtudies has led them to cheriſh a turn for ſpeculative enquiry. If general reaſoning were indeed uſeful to none but the philoſopher, we we ſhould leave the philoſopher to enjoy it as his peculiar prerogative. But if it can be proved to be no leſs neceſſary in the conduct of life than in the ſpeculations of philoſophy, it becomes our buſineſs to endeavour to find out the means which are beſt adapted to its improvement. Theſe the circumſcribed limits of my preſent plan will not permit me to explain at large; neither are my abilities equal to ſuch a taſk: but having proved the advantages which reſult from the cultivation of this faculty, the hints which I ſhall offer, may be ſufficient to direct the mind in ſearch of higher guides.

Subſequent to Abſtraction I ſhall place what offers upon the cultivation of TASTE and IMAGINATION, becauſe the faculty of Abſtraction is neceſſary to both. A few hints concerning the neceſſity of cultivating the power of REFLECTION will conclude the ſeries.

And now, my friend, that I have laid before you a compleat view of the plan which it is my intention to purſue, you will be able in ſome meaſure to decide upon its propriety. Where I fail in the execution, candour will make allowances for the imperfections of one who makes no pretenſions to ſuperior abilities. Placed by Providence in a ſituation undiſturbed by the preſſure of life's cares, tho' by an experience of its ſufferings called to ſerious reflection; bleſt with leiſure, and early inſpired with ſuch a taſte for enquiry as gives that leiſure full employment; I ſhould have deemed myſelf highly culpable, if I had declined the taſk to which I was called by friendſhip,

ſhip, and urged by the hope which is dear to every generous mind—the hope of being in ſome degree uſeful. The arrogance and ambition of a dictator are alike foreign to my heart. But to be an humble inſtrument in rouſing my ſex from the lethargy of quieſcent indolence, to the exertion of thoſe faculties which the bounty of a kind Providence has conferred; to be the means of turning the attention to thoſe objects which tend to the progreſſive improvement of the human race, is a ſpecies of glory to which, I confeſs, I am not indifferent. If in this way

"To covet honour be a ſin,
"I am the moſt offending ſoul alive."

But leſt I ſhould be tempted to further egotiſm, I haſten to aſſure you how much

I am yours, &c.

LETTER II.

PERCEPTION.

Progressive Developement of the Faculties. Perception explained.—Hints towards its Cultivation in early Infancy.—Its Connexion with the benevolent Affections.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THERE is no ſubject more curious in its nature, or that can poſſibly be more univerſally intereſting, than the manner in which Nature operates in the developement of the rational faculties of man. The ſlowneſs of the progreſs is apt to excite our impatience; while, in fact, it ought to call forth our higheſt admiration.

A curſory view of what a child acquires in the firſt two years of its life, will convince

vince us, that were the faculties to open with a rapidity equal to our wiſhes, the powers of the mind would counteract each other in ſuch a manner as effectually to prevent their ever coming to perfection. Happily, Nature at that early period preſents an inſuperable bar to our attempts of improving upon her plan. We may indeed counteract her wiſe deſigns, by retarding the operations of thoſe faculties which ſhe has then put in play, and on the exerciſe of which depends the ſtrength and vigour of the future powers; we may fruſtrate her plan, but we cannot accelerate it. It is not till five or ſix years of life have elapſed, that we ſet about this vain attempt; then we ſometimes do ſet about it in good earneſt, and inſiſt upon the powers of imagination, judgment, and reflection, coming at our call, like the ſpirits of Glendower from the vaſty deep:—

"But do they come, when you do call them?"

Alas!

Alas! we trouble not ourſelves to obſerve whether they do or no. It is ſufficient that children learn to prate by rote upon ſubjects which require the powers of judgment and reflection to comprehend. They repeat the ideas of others, and we are ſatisfied, without taking any account of their own ſtock. An examination into this particular, as it would [illegible]bly lead to mortifying diſappoin[illegible] very properly avoided.

It is thus that prodigies are formed; all of which, as far as I have been able to obſerve, are a ſpecies of forced plants, that upon a ſlight view appear fair and flouriſhing, but have neither ſtrength nor flavour.

Soon would the navy of England ceaſe to be our pride and boaſt, if it were built of timber from the hot-houſe. But although an attempt to force the growth of the ſapling would be detrimental to its future ſtrength, pains muſt be beſtowed in removing all obſtructions that might check

its riſe; its roots muſt have room to ſhoot, or its branches will never expand in blooming verdure. A ſimilar attention to the mind, in the early period of exiſtence, appears to me to be eſſential towards the expanſion of the intellectual powers.

I have already obſerved, that the faculty of Perception is the firſt which opens in the human mind. Though Perception is a word derived from the operation of but one of the ſenſes, it is applied to denote the impreſſion on the mind by all the objects of ſenſe. The meaning of it, as thus applied, muſt be underſtood by every one who reflects on what he does, when he hears, ſees, feels, &c. "Whoever reflects," ſays Locke, "cannot miſs "it; and if he does not reflect, all the "words in the world cannot make him "have any notion of it."

The word Perception is likewiſe frequently uſed in a figurative ſenſe.* But

* In this ſenſe, alſo, do I uſe the word Impreſſion, whenever it is applied to denote mental operation.

the leaſt intelligent perſon muſt perceive the difference betwixt perceiving the letters upon this paper, and perceiving the truth of a propoſition. The perceptions of an infant are equal to the one; conception and judgment are neceſſary to the other.

As the organs of the ſeveral ſenſes are the inlets of Perception, it muſt be evident, that where theſe, eſpecially the important ones of hearing and ſight, are wanting or imperfect, the impreſſions made upon the mind will be likewiſe imperfect. How much this imperfection is obviated in ſome inſtances, by an increaſed attention to the perceptions acquired by means of the remaining perfect organs of ſenſe, is evident in thoſe who are born deaf or blind. It is not that the organs of ſight or hearing are improved by uſe, but that the mind, by a greater degree of attention to the impreſſions made upon it by one of theſe organs, renders its correſpondent perceptions ſo vivid, as, in a great meaſure, to

ſupply

ſupply the want of that organ which Nature has denied.

Nor is this all. As the knowledge attained by our ſenſes is the foundation of all our intellectual improvement, we may obſerve, that the ſpecies of attention which has been above deſcribed, frequently ſerves to open and improve the faculties in ſuch an eminent degree, as to induce a general belief, that thoſe who are born deaf or blind, are perſons of uncommon endowments. If a lively attention to the impreſſions received from the remaining ſenſes can, in ſome meaſure, ſupply the loſs of one of the moſt important organs of Perception; and if it further appears, that this extra-attention is conducive to the improvement of the intellectual faculties; my idea of the advantages to be derived from an attention to the improvement of the perceptive faculties from earlieſt infancy, can neither be deemed chimerical nor abſurd.

"They have eyes and ſee not, ears "have they and hear not," is an emphatic

reproach pronounced in the name of the Moſt High by the lips of an inſpired writer. Any perſon, in the leaſt converſant with the world, may every day have opportunities of applying the truth of this deſcription. Without an habitual attention to the impreſſions made upon the ſenſes, the perceptions are evaneſcent; they are at the moment indiſtinct, and cannot leave any trace upon the memory, ſo as to become objects of reflection.—Hence ariſe innumerable miſtakes in the judgment. To this may be traced many of thoſe falſhoods, which we are ſo apt to attribute to a wilful departure from truth. Indeed the evidence of people, who have never been accuſtomed to make their perceptions objects of attention, can never be relied upon; for without attention there can be no memory. Whoever has been accuſtomed to make obſervations upon the lower orders of ſociety, will agree in the juſtice

juſtice of this remark. (B)* Were it, however, never applicable to any but thoſe of the lower orders, it might here be paſſed over in ſilence; but alas! accurate obſervation is not always the concomitant of rank. The lie of the day in the upper circles does not always originate in malignity: many are the ſlanders, many the falſhoods, that originate in that confuſion of ideas, the foundation of which is laid in the habit of inaccurate perception.

Beſides its baleful influence on the moral character, there is another evil ariſing from this habit of inaccuracy, that deſerves our moſt ſerious attention.

Every ſcience which the human mind can purſue, every ſtudy in which it can engage, demands, as a preliminary, an attention to the objects of perception. In proportion as this attention has been rendered habitual to the mind, from the ear-

* See Note ſecond at the end of the volume.

lieſt

lieſt ſtage of life, will the rudiments of ſcience be eaſy, and the progreſs delightful. A child who has been accuſtomed to pay attention to its perceptions, has received, from the various objects of ſenſe, a fund of ideas which are ready to be brought into uſe; theſe, by the power of aſſociation, aſſiſt the mind in forming new conceptions. Children, who, either through the reprehenſible neglect of their parents, or from ſome defect in their original conformation, have never made this improvement of their perceptive faculties, are, and neceſſarily muſt be, ſlow in comprehending any ſubject. They want, as it were, the firſt link of the chain, and have nothing whereon to faſten the new ideas with which you preſent them.

That this apparent dulneſs is frequently nothing more than the total diſuſe of that faculty of Attention, without which, though the five ſenſes be poſſeſſed in full perfection, there can be no Perception, is evident from this circumſtance, viz. that when ſuch

ſuch children have their perceptions quickened by attention, this apparent ſtupidity gradually clears away, and the intellectual faculties appear often ſtrong and vigorous. If, however, children of this deſcription, whoſe perceptions are either dull by nature, or blunted through want of exerciſe, and who have conſequently no ſtock of ideas, have information forced upon them; it is ten to one, that they will conceive ſuch a diſlike to learning, as will make them continue dunces for ever.

That it is by means of the ſenſes that ideas are firſt acquired, is a fact, which, I apprehend, to be now eſtabliſhed beyond the reach of controverſy. It has, for more than half a century, been generally admitted by philoſophers; but the belief of it has, as far as I know, induced little additional attention towards that period of life, when the knowledge acquired by the ſenſes firſt begins to be communicated to the mind. The reaſon of this neglect is obvious. Memory

mory extends not to thoſe years of childhood when our firſt ideas were acquired. We can recollect the period when knowledge was firſt communicated to us by others, but of our previous conceptions we have no remembrance. We therefore look upon thoſe firſt years as a ſort of blank in our exiſtence, and naturally conſider them as the ſame with regard to our children. All our pains, all our attention, with reſpect to their minds, is therefore reſerved for that period, when we think it proper, that, according to cuſtom, they ſhould begin to receive inſtruction.

It is no uncommon thing to ſee a mother, who has never aſſiſted her child in the acquirement of a ſingle idea during infancy, expreſſing the utmoſt anxiety for its learning to read. As ſoon as the age for taſks arrives, taſks muſt be given, or the child is loſt! Thus is an invincible averſion to learning often inſpired; while if the tenth part of the pains then beſtowed had been given at a more

a more early period, curioſity would have been awakened, and the mind would have been prepared for the reception of farther inſtruction. The ſeed that is to bring forth an hundred-fold, muſt be ſown in good, and in *prepared*, ground.

Let us now take a view of the manner in which the infant faculties unfold. It is probable, that as ſoon as a child is capable of fixing its eyes upon an object, it acquires ſome idea of the object it beholds. Theſe muſt be for a conſiderable time very confuſed; the very notion of diſtance being one that is acquired by the mind, and not the natural conſequence of ſight. To a child, or to a grown perſon born blind, but who has by an operation been reſtored to ſight, every object appears to preſs upon the eye at an equal diſtance;* nor is it till experience has taught the contrary, that either the

* The ſame may be obſerved in all other animals. I remember being once greatly ſurpriſed at ſeeing a young puppy, which I had put upon the table, delibe-

child,

child, or the reſtored perſon, can be convinced of it. This acquired perception is very gradually attained, and probably remains imperfect till the child can run about; nor does it then extend to diſtant objects, few children of five or ſix years old being capable of making any diſtinction betwixt an object that is only half a mile, from thoſe that are four or five miles diſtant. The ſame may be obſerved of people brought up in towns; many inhabitants of the city of London, in reſpect to the perception of the diſtance of remote objects, remain children during life.

Ideas of the diſtance of objects can only be obtained by experience; but the means

rately put its paw over, and conſequently fall with violence upon the floor: I then attributed this to want of ſenſe. But an explanation of the theory of viſion convinced me, that the puppy did not perceive the carpet as a diſtant object. Were man to gain the uſe of his legs at as early a period of his life as the four-footed animals do, to what innumerable dangers would he be expoſed! In this, as in all the ordinances of Nature, we ſee the wiſdom and the goodneſs of the Great Creator.

of

of our children's experience are on our hands. When a child of five or ſix months old fixes its attention upon any object, it ought to be induced to view it at every different degree of diſtance, to examine it near, and to look at it far of; and thus, by degrees, ideas of Perception will be acquired. By ſome pains taken to fix theſe ideas in the mind, during the firſt two years of life, many fatal accidents might be prevented.

From the want of experience, our own notions of perpendicular diſtance, as far as they are obtained from the eye, are imperfect. No wonder, then, that children ſhould be liable to ſo many fatal miſtakes concerning it. When a child's firſt notions upon this head are obtained by means of a ſevere fall, it is apt to produce a bad effect upon the mind, by inſpiring that terror, the conſequences of which I have already explained at large. This paſſion, as I have formerly ſhewn, continues to operate

operate upon the mind by means of aſſociation, long after the cauſe that firſt produced it is forgotten. I have known people who dared not look down a precipice; nay ſome who dared not look from a high window, though perfectly conſcious of their ſecurity. Is it not probable, that theſe falſe fears have originated, either in ſome ſtrong impreſſion of terror, (the circumſtances attending which may be beyond recollection) or in falſe notions of perpendicular diſtance, given by a fooliſh nurſe, by way of keeping her charge from danger?

As ſoon as the ſight is perfect, it muſt behold the objects before it. But it is not, till capable of ſome degree of attention, that a child can have what I call a *perception* of the object. This faculty of attention begins to diſplay itſelf about the third or fourth month. In thriving, lively children, it is about this period very perceptible. Delightful it is to obſerve this dawn of intellect in the little innocent. Caught by

ſome

ſome lively colour, ſome gay appearance, the eye fixes in eager though ſhort-lived examination, commonly ending in a crow of delight. The tone of nature ought then to be followed. Let the little creature be danced and toſſed about, till both you and it are tired. But when again its grave looks denote a fixed attention, let nonſenſe, I beſeech you, have a truce. Let the eternal bunch of keys be ſtill; nor endeavour, by ill-judged interruption, to break the ſhort reverie; but rather, by ſubmitting, if poſſible, the object of attention to the touch, give two ſenſes an opportunity of judging, inſtead of one.

At two months old, a child is evidently capable of diſtinguiſhing betwixt a white ball, and a black or brown one. But its perceptions muſt have been further opened, before it can obſerve any difference betwixt a ball covered with white leather, and one of ivory. Every diſtinction which the mind can make, you may reckon a new idea

idea acquired. It is in your power to multiply theſe ideas at a very early period. It is likewiſe unfortunately in the power of a fooliſh nurſe to retard the natural progreſs of the mind, by perpetually interrupting its attention. A child that is much danced about, and much talked to, by a very lively nurſe, has many more ideas, than one that is kept by a ſilent and indolent perſon. A nurſe ſhould be able to talk nonſenſe in abundance; but then ſhe ſhould be able to know when to ſtop.*

Good temper and activity are ſuch indiſpenſable qualities, that if either be want-

* It has been obſerved to me by a Lady, who, to uncommon ſenſe and penetration has united the advantage of much practical experience, that nothing tends more effectually to retard the progreſs of the infant faculties, than a cuſtom prevalent with nurſes, of keeping the child in a perpetual trot upon the knee. Does the poor infant fix its attention upon an object? the knee is immediately in motion to prevent the poſſibility of its acquiring any idea from it. Does it ſhew ſymptoms of diſplacency or diſtreſs? the trot goes on with redoubled velocity, till the little creature is ſtupified into ſilence.

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ing in its nurſe, the child runs the riſk of being deficient in animal ſpirits, or of having its temper ſpoiled by improper treatment. Whether what are called *Animal Spirits*, be the cauſe or the conſequence of a rapid flow of ideas, it is not at preſent our buſineſs to enquire; it is ſufficient for us to obſerve their inſeparable connexion. Wherever the animal ſpirits have received a fatal check in the period of infancy, the ſucceſſion of ideas is ſlow, and the perceptions languid. In ſuch children we may frequently obſerve a premature diſplay of the powers of reflection; but ſeldom, very ſeldom does the unnatural maturity of this faculty produce any thing great or admirable. The laws of nature are immutable; nor can we ever expect ſucceſs, if we reverſe her wiſe decrees.

A misfortune oppoſite to what has been above alluded to, is ſometimes the conſequence of an unuſual flow of animal ſpirits in infancy. I mean the loſs of the capability of attention.

attention. This, I believe, always proceeds from improper management in very early life; for the moſt lively infants make the moſt early diſplay of the faculty of attention, and would no doubt continue to exert it on the objects of perception, if they were not injudiciouſly diverted from the attempt.

The more lively the flow of ideas, the more ſtrongly is the mind impelled to increaſe their number. Hence proceeds that curioſity ſo remarkable in children; an engine more powerful in the hands of judicious parents than the boaſted *fulcrum* of the Syracuſan philoſopher. To direct this curioſity into proper channels, ought to be the unceaſing object of parental care, from the dawn of intellect till its maturity. In early infancy, it muſt be excluſively directed to the acquirement of clear and diſtinct notions of the objects of perception.

As ſoon as children acquire the uſe of ſpeech, we may obſerve their number of

ideas to increaſe with aſtoniſhing rapidity. As letters, when arranged upon paper, become the ſigns of words, ſo are words the ſigns of ideas; and as in acquiring the knowledge of letters, we muſt learn to aſſociate the idea of the ſound of each letter with the written character, ſo in acquiring the uſe of words, we muſt aſſociate the ſound of each word with the idea it is meant to expreſs. When we give a due degree of conſideration to this curious fact, we ſhall be aſtoniſhed at the number of words which a child of three years old has acquired!

Let us ſee how many powers of the mind are neceſſary to the acquirement of every word which is the ſign of a diſtinct idea. There muſt be, in the *firſt* place, a diſtinct perception of the object, which could never be obtained but by the exertion of the faculty of attention; *ſecondly*, it muſt have been an object of conception; *thirdly*, of memory; *fourthly*, a conſiderable

able degree of judgment muſt have been exerted, in diſcriminating the particular ſound, expreſſive of the idea; and *fifthly*, that ſound muſt have been connected with the idea by the laws of aſſociation. Before the child can have pronounced the words mamma, papa, chair, table, &c. with appropriate meaning, all this intellectual proceſs muſt have been gone through. How abſurd is it, then, to imagine that this period of life is worthy of no attention! If the uſe of ſpeech, be and to me it appears evident that it is, a means of facilitating the acquirement of ideas, ſome pains ought to be beſtowed on the attainment of diſtinct articulation. It has been obſerved to me by a judicious friend, that children are greatly aſſiſted in this proceſs by teaching them, as ſoon as they acquire the uſe of ſpeech, diſtinctly to pronounce the letters of the alphabet. This is ſeldom thought of, till children are taught their letters; their articulation is conſequently

ſeldom

ſeldom diſtinct till that period; and it may be obſerved, that the articulation of thoſe who never learn to read, is ſeldom diſtinct through life.

The impreſſions made upon the mind through the medium of the ſight are, I believe, the chief ſource of ideas in the period of infancy. That they are not, however, the only ſource, is obvious from the attention which children pay to ſound: and I am led to believe, that every thing which has been ſaid to prove the poſſibility of improving the perceptions of children with regard to objects of ſight, may likewiſe be applied to the perceptions of ſound. As people who are bleſt with good ſight, muſt, when they open their eyes, of neceſſity ſee; ſo muſt all who have the organs of hearing perfect, of neceſſity hear every noiſe that is made beſide them. But as an object muſt be ſurveyed with ſome degree of attention, before it can properly be ſaid to be perceived; ſo muſt

muſt a ſound be liſtened to with ſome attention, before its degrees of intonation can be diſcriminated. A perſon who has no ear for muſic, hears the ſound of a violin as well as the moſt critical connoiſſeur: the noiſe made upon the inſtrument is equally loud in the ears of both. To the one, it is a continued and irkſome noiſe; to the other, when touched by a maſterly hand, it emits ſounds expreſſive of all the ſentiments that can be felt by the human breaſt; now elevating the ſoul with emotions of ſublimity, now melting it into tenderneſs. The ſenſe of hearing is in theſe two perſons equally acute; whence, then, proceeds this amazing difference in their perceptions?

An examination of the faculty of attention may, perhaps, give us ſome aſſiſtance towards the ſolution of this difficulty; though the fuller explanation of it muſt be reſerved for the letter on Taſte. Where the organs of hearing are perfect, I believe,

lieve, it never happens, that a perſon who has been early accuſtomed to pay attention to muſical notes, is found incapable of diſcriminating betwixt grave and acute ſounds, or of marking the number of notes in a bar, which conſtitutes what is called Time. This is the work of attention.—The pleaſure derived from muſical compoſition has another ſource. It is an emotion of taſte; and under that head we ſhall examine it.

Some children appear to have much quicker perceptions than others. Where this faculty appears weak, great pains ought to be taken to invigorate it. The mind ought to be won to the examination of objects by every engaging art; nor ſhould it be ſuffered to reſt ſatisfied with ſuch a ſlight and ſuperficial ſurvey, as may convey a falſe impreſſion. It is by repeated and attentive examination, that children learn to perceive the difference betwixt inanimate objects which are put in motion,

and

and ſenſitive nature. Without ſome pains beſtowed in teaching this diſtinction, children either learn to attach ideas of animation to mechanical motion, or of inſenſibility to all living objects, that are inferior to the human ſize and figure. The firſt is the cauſe of a thouſand fooliſh terrors, and the latter leads to many infant acts of cruelty. I have ſeen a child afraid of the wheels of its little chaiſe, when it ſaw them put in motion; and known the work of a great clock, or the ſtriking of a great bell, excite emotions of terror, to an advanced period of life. Had the perceptions been in infancy exerciſed in examining the nature of objects, theſe falſe fears could never have been engendered.

On the other hand, if a child has not been accuſtomed to examine living objects, and made ſenſible that every thing which lives has ſenſation; it may amuſe itſelf with torturing the inferior animals, till habits of cruelty are deeply implanted in the mind.

So

So nicely interwoven are the moral feelings and the intellectual faculties of man, that it is impoſſible effectually to improve the one, while the other is neglected or deſtroyed. In the cultivation of the perceptive faculties, we lay the foundation for that quick diſcernment, which is equally neceſſary in acquiring juſt notions of things, and in diſcovering the true path of moral rectitude. By the neglect of theſe faculties we not only enfeeble the underſtanding, but lay the foundation of thoſe falſe aſſociations, which extend their baleful influence to the affections of the heart.

As it is by means of Attention only that the perceptions can be improved, I ſhall proceed to a more minute examination of this important faculty in the following Letter.

Farewell.

LETTER III.

ATTENTION.

The Power of Attention in improving the Perceptions.—The Velocity of its Operation so great as to render it frequently imperceptible.—The Influence of the Passions upon Attention.—Illustrations by Example.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

TO impreſs a conviction of the neceſſity of cultivating the faculty of ATTENTION, nothing more is neceſſary, than to demonſtrate its being eſſential to the operation of every other faculty.

The ſenſes are the organs of information to the mind; and upon their evidence the learned and the vulgar rely with equal confidence.

confidence. Yet the clearneſs, and, in many inſtances, the truth of their evidence, depends upon the degree of attention that has been exerted. Where the exertion of Attention has been habitually neglected, the ſenſes loſe their vigour, and the perceptions become languid and confuſed;* but where, on the contrary, the perceptions have been exerciſed by attention, they acquire new ſtrength, and are brought to a degree of perfection, which, in ſome inſtances, appears quite extraordinary.

The truth of what is here advanced will appear beyond all diſpute, when we conſider, that people, who, from their peculiar avocations, as hunters, ſailors, &c. are habitually intent upon diſtant objects, become

* It may be obſerved, that the lower order of ſervants frequently appear dull of hearing; and that without any defect in the organs of viſion, they often do not ſee the objects before them; nor till conſiderable pains have been taken, do they perceive minute differences with regard to the ſize and colour of objects, or whether they be ſtraight or crooked, &c. &c.

bitually

capable of diſtinctly diſcerning objects at ſuch an immenſe diſtance, as totally removes them from the ſight of ſuch as have never been accuſtomed to make ſimilar obſervations; while, on the other land, thoſe who have from early life been accuſtomed to examine minute objects near the eye, frequently become purblind. This defect evidently increaſes with the increaſe of luxury, which draws people together into cities, where children are brought up in ignorance of all the ſublime objects of nature, and have their ſenſe of ſight perpetually occupied in a narrow ſphere.

I am aware of the objection that may be here ſtarted, on account of the formation of the eye; from which, it appears, that ſhort-ſightedneſs muſt be the inevitable conſequence of a certain degree of convexity. But why is this convexity confined to people in certain ſituations? Why does it only appear in thoſe whoſe purſuits and avocations demand minute attention?

To

To a natural defect in the organs of vision, the child of the peasant is as liable as the child of the prince; but seldom shall we meet with a short-sighted person, who has been from infancy accustomed to the observation of distant objects in the country.—Does not this evince the wonder-working power of Attention?

Those who enjoy the blessings of sight and hearing, receive through the medium of these senses so much information, that they pay little attention to the sense of feeling. But when a person is deprived of sight, this sense becomes so necessary towards the acquirement of ideas, that the attention is then turned towards it so effectually, as to make it appear to the vulgar like the acquirement of a new sense. The skin of my hand is as fine, the nerves are as exquisitely susceptible, as any blind person's whatever; yet on feeling the sheet of paper on which I write, with the utmost attention of which I am *now* capable, I cannot

not perceive any difference betwixt the part that is written, and the remainder of the page; yet this, I know, would have been inſtantly diſtinguiſhed by a blind lady with whom I was formerly acquainted. So exquiſite had the ſenſe of feeling in this lady become, that I have ſeen her thread a fine cambric needle with the utmoſt eaſe, the aperture of which could ſcarcely be diſcerned by my eye; and ſo acute was her perception of quantity, that in running her hand along the front wall of a new apartment, ſhe inſtantly diſcovered an error in placing the windows, which had totally eſcaped every other perſon. From this, and ſimilar circumſtances, I am perſuaded, that by Attention the ſenſe of touch might be made much more uſeful to us than it generally is.

The ſenſe of Taſte is originally equal in the peaſant and the voluptuary. In the peaſant it remains through life ſimple and uncultivated; but in the votaries of luxury,

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it is, perhaps, the only perception that is brought to any degree of perfection. Of all our ſenſes, this of Taſte furniſhes the mind with the feweſt ideas of reflection; the cultivation of it is therefore leaſt eſſential to the improvement of our intellectual faculties. Is it not, then, lamentable, to find the attention in early and in later life, ſo excluſively directed to the cultivation of this ſenſe? The perſon who cannot diſtinguiſh the difference of colours, muſt neceſſarily have indiſtinct conceptions of particular ſpecies of beauty. He who cannot extend his obſervation to diſtant objects, muſt have his ſtock of ideas proportionally limited; but though a man ſhould not be able to diſtinguiſh betwixt the different taſtes of parſnip and of turtle, the number of his ideas of reflection will ſuffer little diminution. The ſame attention that is beſtowed in acquiring this delicacy of perception with regard to the palate, would, in an equal degree, increaſe the perceptions

from

from all the other organs of ſenſation. And the only reaſon why the habit of Attention is more eaſily acquired in the one inſtance than in the others, is, that Attention is in the one caſe ſtimulated by appetite, while, in the other, it has no ſuch ſtimulus.

This naturally leads us to conſider the operation of the paſſions upon the faculty of Attention. This operation I conceive to be mutual; the paſſions rouſe attention, and attention increaſes paſſion by a ſort of re-action.

By Attention the exiſtence of every paſſion is prolonged in an unnatural degree. Wherever the attention is neceſſarily divided betwixt the object of paſſion and other objects, its force ſoon diminiſhes. No perſon, who is under the neceſſity of earning a ſubſiſtence, is in any danger of dying either of grief or love.

Where ſelfiſhneſs predominates, we ſhall find the attention perpetually alive to every minute circumſtance, that can in any wiſe affect

affect the eaſe, health, or comfort, of the perſon concerned; while that which affects the eaſe, health, or comfort of others, is totally overlooked. Where the attention is thus excluſively turned to ſelf, it never fails to create a ſuſceptibility of feeling, which deceives the mind into an opinion of its own exquiſite ſenſibility. But what is the ſenſibility, that is not under the influence of benevolence? Let thoſe who pique themſelves upon the poſſeſſion of this amiable quality, try it by the teſt I have given. Let them obſerve, if their attention is as much alive to whatever can affect the feelings of others, as to whatever even remotely concerns themſelves. Let them eſtimate their feelings by the manner in which they *feel* for the trouble and uneaſineſs they create to thoſe around them. If attention be turned to leſſen this trouble, and to alleviate this uneaſineſs, with as much ardour as it is engaged in leſſening and alleviating what comes home

home to ſelf, it will produce that legitimate ſenſibility, which is born of benevolence. But where ſelf is the great, the only object of attention, ſenſibility and ſelfiſhneſs may be conſidered as ſynonimous.

By the attention which a delicate ſtate of health demands, a diſpoſition to ſelfiſhneſs is frequently produced. Another proof in favour of my argument, as it ſhews the power which attention has over the affections of the heart. When directed towards others by pity, love, gratitude, or any of the ſympathetic emotions, it increaſes the diſpoſition to benevolence. When excluſively devoted to the ſtudy of ſelfiſh gratification, it augments the ſpirit of ſelfiſhneſs. Hence the neceſſity of teaching children to pay attention to others.

I have, in the former volume, given ſome inſtances of the operation of ſelfiſhneſs in thoſe who are the ſlaves of terror. Let us now obſerve the power of this paſſion in quickening the faculty of attention.

The ſtrongeſt facts brought forward by the advocates of *natural* antipathy all go to prove, that perſons under the influence of ſuch antipathies have a ſort of inſtinctive knowledge of the preſence of the objects of their averſion. As for inſtance; a perſon who has a natural antipathy to a cat, will immediately diſcover when one is in the room, even though it ſhould be effectually hid from his ſight. The ſame ſpecies of ſagacity I once ſaw in a Lady, who had an antipathy to dead birds. Soon after entering the parlour of a friend's houſe, where ſhe went on a morning-viſit, ſhe grew ſick, and inſtantly declared that there muſt be a dead bird in the room. The bird-cage was immediately examined, and poor Dicky found dead at the bottom of the cage! I at that time became a convert to the doctrine of antipathies, and ſhould probably have remained ſo ever after, had I not been led to reflect on the power of attention in the ſeeming improve-

ment

ment of the faculties. On conſidering this ſubject, it appeared to me, that if the ſenſe of feeling can, by the power of habitual attention, convey thoſe nice perceptions of the ſurfaces of body, which, to people who have not thus exerciſed their attention, appear aſtoniſhing and incomprehenſible; why might not attention (ſtimulated, as it muſt be in theſe inſtances, by the impulſe of averſion) produce a like lively perception of ſmell? That a perſon who has had his attention frequently thus directed, may be able to perceive a certain effluvia which eſcapes the obſervation of others, is no more extraordinary, than that a blind perſon ſhould be able to diſtinguiſh colours by the touch.

I am too well aware of the taſte for the wonderful that prevails on vulgar minds, to expect any of that deſcription to enter into this mode of reaſoning. To minds of a higher order, therefore, do I now addreſs myſelf; and ſincerely hope I ſhall one day have

have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſubject entered upon and purſued by thoſe who are equal to the inveſtigation. To men of ſcience who are intimately acquainted with the human frame, the ſubject muſt be particularly intereſting. (c)* It is they only who can determine, how far this power of attention may explain the apparent effects produced by charms, and all the long *et-cetera* of fooleries, which have in every age abuſed the credulity of mankind.—Should it appear that the wonderful cures effected by animal magnetiſm, tractors, and ſuch like inefficient cauſes, may really be explained by the phænomena of attention, it will tend to raiſe the importance of our preſent ſubject. And I confeſs, I am the more ſanguine on this point, upon conſidering that the efficacy of all theſe wonder-working charms ſeems entirely to depend on the *attention* of the public; and that, like the hyſteric fits of fine ladies, they

* See Note at the end of the Volume.

ceaſe

ceaſe to operate the moment they ceaſe to be obſerved.

Attention is not only neceſſary to the improvement of our perceptive, but is eſſential to the operation of all our intellectual, faculties. How much memory depends upon it, is known to all. By habitual exerciſe its operation becomes ſo quick, as to require, in ſome inſtances, no inconſiderable degree of reflection, to make us ſenſible of its having actually been exerted.

Dr. Stewart, with that enlightened penetration which characterizes all his obſervations, has traced the operation of attention in ſome of thoſe actions, which philoſophers had formally conſidered as mechanical. He has, I think, moſt ſatisfactorily proved, that the moſt rapid performer in muſic muſt neceſſarily pay attention to every note he plays, tho' his attention is ſo evaneſcent as to leave no conſciouſneſs of its exertion.* I cannot pretend to improve upon his illuſ-

* See Elements of the Philoſophy of the Human Mind.

trations: but I may be permitted to give an example more familiar to my own ſex, than thoſe which he has adduced.

You I know can knit: and can do it ſo well that you may have forgot the proceſs of learning it. Take then one of your children, who knows nothing of the matter, and in teaching her, you will obſerve the difficulty of the operation. The poſition of the needles muſt firſt be attended to; then the thread muſt be twiſted round the proper finger; then the ſtitch muſt be lifted by the needle; then the fore-finger of the right-hand muſt caſt the thread round the needle, which muſt then be returned through the ſtitch; and finally, the ſtitch muſt be gently dropped by the needle in the left-hand, without injury to the reſt. Every one of theſe operations requires a ſeparate and fixed attention: and yet by habit they come to be performed ſo rapidly, that we appear to give them no thought. By habit I can perform all theſe operations,

while

while reading a book that ſeems to require my whole undivided attention. According to the opinion of the juſtly-celebrated Hartley, my mind has now no concern in this proceſs. He would ſay, that the motions of my fingers "cling to one another "in the way of aſſociation, the acts of vo-"lition (or will) growing leſs and leſs ex-"preſs all the time, till at laſt they become "evaneſcent and imperceptible." But that the attention is ſtill, however imperceptibly, engaged, is evident from this, that the moment I drop a ſtitch, it is taken notice of; and that, however deeply engaged in my ſtudies, I do not forget to turn the ſtitch that marks the ſeam at every ſecond round.

Should any grave philoſopher deign to look into theſe pages, I will permit him to ſmile at this ſimple illuſtration, which he may, if he pleaſes, call, *argumentum ad feminam*; but if it aid my deſign of exhibiting the power of attention, as eſſential

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in every voluntary operation of mind or body, it will fully anſwer the purpoſe for which I intended it.

The great object of this imperfect, tho' perhaps too tedious, examination of the faculty of attention, is to impreſs a conviction of the neceſſity of its early and aſſiduous cultivation. In this we are happily aſſiſted by that curioſity, which even in the dawn of intellect is obvious in the infant mind. When this curioſity calls forth attention, let us not counteract the wiſe deſigns of Nature; let us rather be aſſiſting in bringing to perfection the plan which ſhe has in a manner ſketched. In the examination of ſenſible objects, let all the ſenſes be duly exerciſed, that the indiſtinct ideas received through the medium of one of the ſenſes may be fully cleared and explained by the others.

Here is a ball of white cotton, there is one covered with white leather, and there another of ivory; not only ſight, but feeling,

ing, and hearing, muſt be exerciſed, before a child can diſcriminate the properties that conſtitute their eſſential differences. In doing this, how many powers of the mind muſt be employed, in all of which attention is implied as an eſſential?

As the ſphere of obſervation enlarges, the objects of attention multiply on every ſide; upon theſe the judgment now begins to be frequently exerciſed, and the rudiments of invention appear. The moſt effectual aid which we can give to the progreſs of theſe powers, is to provide for their proper exerciſe. The child who is for ever cooped up in a nurſery, and who has no other objects whereon to exerciſe its curioſity and attention, ſave a few pretty painted toys, will ſoon have its curioſity checked, and its power of attention weakened. In theſe circumſtances, neither judgment nor invention can be expected to diſplay themſelves at an early period. They are both conſtantly anticipated by the provident

vident care of the attendants, in whom it would be a breach of duty to let little maſter have the trouble of acting or thinking in any inſtance for himſelf.

Nor where the circumſtances of parents happily forbid the attendance of a train of mercenary mind-perverters, are the children always permitted to reap the advantage of their ſituation. Too often have I beheld the budding intellect as effectually nipped by the injudicious anticipations of an indulgent mother, as it could have been by the moſt fooliſh nurſery-maid. Children who are accuſtomed to this ſpecies of conſtant ſuperintendance and prevention, have no inducement to the acquirement of thoſe habits of attention, which I conſider as the baſis of all intellectual improvement.

"You can't open that pretty box, love;
"come to me, and I will do it for you.
"See! what nice comfits there are in it!"
The box is opened, the comfits are eaten, and mamma again ſcrews on the lid.—

Pleaſed

Pleaſed with the novelty, little maſter again deſires to have it opened, and again ſhe complies with his requeſt. The requeſt, or rather command, is again repeated, and complied with; till mamma grows tired, and then ſhe declares that the naughty box will not open any more! The ill-humour which ſucceeds, is ſtifled by more comfits from her pocket, or the poor child is coaxed to reſume the ſtring by which the painted horſe is dragged round the room. All this I have ſeen, and ſimilar occurrences may be now in your recollection. Let us ſee how the ſame circumſtance is managed by a judicious mother.

" Here is a pretty box, mamma; but it " won't open, all that I can do."

' That box, my dear, won't open by ' force; the lid is ſcrewed on, and it muſt ' be turned in ſuch a manner as to take ' out the ſcrew. Obſerve. There! it is ' opened! now ſee how the part that fixes, ' is cut in the manner of a ſcrew.'

" Oh, yes,

" O! yes, now I underſtand it; for I
" remember what papa told me one day
" about the cork-ſcrew, when I was look-
" ing at it: but I thought there was no
" uſe of ſcrews, but to draw corks."

' All ſcrews are made upon the ſame
' plan, or principle, as it is called; will
' you remember that word?'

" Yes, mamma; but what elſe is there
" beſides cork-ſcrews and ſcrew-lids for
" comfit boxes?"

' Many things, my love, are made upon
' the ſame principle. A piece of furni-
' ture that is juſt by you, is made upon
' the principle of the ſcrew; and if you
' will find it out, I will give you a kiſs.'

" I ſee! I ſee! it is the ſtool on which
" my ſiſter ſits at the piano-forte. It turns
" and riſes juſt like the lid of this box."

This ſcene I have likewiſe witneſſed. Does it require any argument to prove which of theſe children would be moſt likely to pay attention to the objects of perception?

perception? Can we be at any loſs to determine, which would be beſt prepared for receiving inſtruction at that period, when, in the minds of unthinking people, inſtruction commences?

As my portraits are all drawn from real life, I ſhall, if you pleaſe, take a view of two families brought up on the oppoſite principles I have here ſtated. The parents of each family were equally fond of their offspring. The children were equally promiſing; and, had the management of their early years been equally judicious, I have every reaſon to believe, that the intellectual endowments of the children of each family would have been much upon a par.

Mrs. X. was a domeſtic character, was much at home, and always with her children. Unfortunately for them, ſhe had conceived the idea that education was to be the work of their teachers, and that till they learned to read, they could learn nothing.

nothing. To keep them out of harm's way, to amuſe, to feed, and to dreſs them, ſhe conſidered as duties; and piqued herſelf on giving up ſociety in order to devote herſelf to their performance. For their amuſement ſhe ſpared no expence in the purchaſe of toys; her ſitting-room was filled with the painted fragments of broken chariots and diſabled horſes. Freſh toys ſupplied the place of thoſe that were demoliſhed, and one of the active powers of the mind was thus brought forth in the love of novelty. This ſhort-lived paſſion was ſucceeded by ſatiety, and ſatiety by diſguſt. If ever curioſity appeared, it was immediateiy repreſſed by thoſe fooliſh anſwers to every enquiry that are thought *ſo proper* for children.

At length the appointed period for learning to read arrives. Induced by the pretty book, by novelty, and the reward of ſugar-plums, the child gets acquainted with its letters. Novelty then ceaſes to operate;

rate; the pretty book has loſt its charms, and ſugar-plums are no rarity. No matter; the leſſons muſt go on in regular courſe. The poor child, who never from the hour of its birth has had its attention exerciſed upon any object whatever, muſt now attend. Without any diſtinct idea upon any ſubject, without any link in the chain of aſſociation, it muſt now learn to repeat words that are ſet down for it. It has no curioſity to be gratified; nor, indeed, is curioſity endeavoured to be excited. But as all little maſters and miſſes of ſuch an age learn to read, it too muſt learn at all events. What is the natural conſequence? The child acquires an inſuperable averſion to reading, which long operates as a bar to every improvement. That this really happens, I can aver from actual experience; having known a child exactly thus brought up, who, at nine years of age, would grow pale at the ſight of a book, and at the propoſal of reading would, by the fallen countenance

tenance and dejected eye, plainly evince the moſt deep-felt averſion.

In proportion to the vivacity or dullneſs of the power of conception, this averſion will be the more or leſs unconquerable. Where conception is languid, it will probably remain fixed for life; and the only reading that people of this deſcription will ever take to, is works of fancy. In thoſe the languid imagination is aided, indolence is gratified, and the mind that is incapable of combining images for itſelf, enjoys a ſort of childiſh pleaſure in ſurveying thoſe that are held up to it by others.

Let us now turn to Mrs. Z. the mother who taught her ſon the properties of one of the principles of mechanics, in unſcrewing his toy. In this little incident, an example has been already given of the method ſhe took to call the attention of her children to an accurate examination of every object that came within the ſphere of their obſervation. Every field flower which

the

they gathered in their walks, every pebble which they picked up in the road, was a ſource of new ideas to their tender minds. Curioſity was thus awakened, turned to its proper objects, and ſo judiciouſly gratified, as to lay the foundation of a love of knowledge the firſt ſtep to all improvement. Reading was taught with eaſe, and conſidered by the children in the light of a privilege, rather than a taſk. To keep the deſire of information alive in the mind, curioſity was often but partially gratified; and full information referred to the period when the children might themſelves acquire it from books.

How effectually the love of reading may be thus inſpired, will appear from the following incident: The eldeſt little boy of a family brought up exactly as I have deſcribed, when about nine years of age, was put to ſleep in a room where ſome old books were kept in an open cloſet; among theſe was Pope's tranſlation of the Iliad,

which ſoon attracted the young gentleman's attention. So delighted was the boy with its peruſal, that, as it afterwards appeared, he uſed to watch the firſt dawn of day, (and it was then the middle of ſummer) take his book into bed, and read with avidity for hours before the family were aſtir. This might never have been known, but for a query which he put to his mother, to whom he conſtantly applied for aſſiſtance in every difficulty. That which now perplexed him, might have poſed more able critics; I ſhall give it in his own words. "Pray, "mamma," ſaid he, "what was the rea- "ſon that Venus, who was quite a *true* "*goddeſs*, could not make her ſon Æneas "immortal; while Thetis, who was but a "ſort of *half-goddeſs*, could confer immor- "tality upon hers?"

Do you not conceive, my dear friend, nay, do you not *feel*, how the heart of the parent muſt have thrilled at this proof of penetration and ſagacity in her darling boy?

boy? What a charming opportunity of explaining the nature of fabulous poetry; of giving diſtinct ideas of heathen mythology; and of impreſſing upon the mind a clear perception of the ſuperiority of a ſublimer ſyſtem! In the hands of ſuch a mother, we may believe that ſuch an opportunity would not be loſt.

You will, perhaps, attribute all this to the effect of extraordinary genius. That this child was not a boy of ordinary capacity, I muſt allow; but ſtill I am of opinion, that had he been brought up from the cradle as the children of Mrs. X. were brought up, had his attention never been awakened to the objects of perception, had his early curioſity been repreſſed, and no aſſiſtance given to his mind in the formation of its ideas, his conceptions muſt have been neceſſarily ſo much leſs lively, ſo much leſs accurate and diſtinct, that his genius, at the time we ſpeak of, would have been far from appearing extraordinary.

Far

Far from conſidering all to be born with the ſame degree of intellectual capacity, I believe there are different degrees of ſtrength and vigour in the intellect as well as the corporeal frame. But let not this analogy carry us too far; let us not imagine that the mental, like the bodily, powers, will expand of their own accord. Nature has provided for the preſervation of a certain degree of ſtrength, beauty, and proportion, in the ſpecies, by ordaining that where theſe are greatly deficient, the race ſhall ſoon become extinct; but the race of fools may, alas! be multiplied without end.

The utmoſt care that can be beſtowed on the improvement of the periſhable fabric, can add but little to its ſtrength; whereas the mind—the immortal, the imperiſhable part—is happily ſo formed, as to be ſuſceptible of progreſſive improvement through the ages of eternity. The wiſdom, the knowledge, of every generation is an accumulated treaſure that de-

ſcends to its poſterity. We in this age are born to a rich inheritance; let us not, like prodigals, ſquander it upon unprofitable trifles; let us rather put it out to intereſt, that the capital of the ſucceeding age may be increaſed. The ſureſt method of effecting the increaſe of this intellectual ſtock is to lay a foundation for the improvement of the mental powers, by an attention to their cultivation from the earlieſt period of their exiſtence. For this purpoſe we muſt obſerve, (and the obſervation cannot be too often urged) that the appearance of the different faculties of the mind is not ſimultaneous, but progreſſive. We too frequently expect every thing from reaſon; but if the preparatory faculties are neglected, reaſon will never ripen to maturity. It is they which muſt afford the materials on which reaſon is to operate. Nature has afforded a ſpace for their exerciſe; ſhe has given time for their attaining ſome degree of vigour, before reaſon

brought forth. It is in not attending to her wiſe regulations, that all our errors in education originate. Let us ſtudy her laws, and in them admire the bleſſed proviſion which the divine ſource of all perfection has made for the happineſs and improvement of his rational offspring!

Before I take leave of this important branch of our ſubject, I wiſh to propoſe to your conſideration a few obſervations upon the nature of thoſe trains of thought, which, from the firſt glimmerings of ſenſe to the lateſt period of exiſtence, flow through the mind in a never-ceaſing current. Every article that compoſes this perennial ſtream, has been an object of previous attention; and from its prevailing materials, every perſon may, upon ſelf-examination, learn to what claſs of objects the attention has been chiefly directed. Joy and grief, complacency and reſentment, each introduce trains of ideas of correſpondent complexion. While the mind is agitated by any of theſe emotions,

emotions, the attention cannot be turned to indifferent objects without a violent effort; and if these emotions frequently are introduced in early life, we need not expect that the effort ever will be made. Hence the importance of preserving the tender mind from the dominion of passion; hence the necessity of exerting our utmost endeavours to conquer in infancy those unruly desires arising from the gratification of self-will, which give a direction to ATTENTION unfavourable to the culture of all the mental faculties.

If the trains of thought, which in our waking hours incessantly flow through the mind, depend upon the nature of the objects to which we chiefly direct our attention, it appears of the utmost consequence to our success in education, to turn the attention to such objects as may introduce trains of thought unconnected with any violent emotion. This is the great advantage of the pursuit of science. When

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it fortunately happens, that the attention is thus directed in early life, the unruly paſſions will not gain a premature admiſſion into the youthful boſom. Many a rural nymph might have been ſaved from heart felt miſery by ſuch a knowledge of botany or mineralogy as would compleatly have occupied her leiſure hours in retirement; while, from the mere want of objects to engage her attention, the Damon or the Corydon that firſt preſents himſelf, ſeldom fails to become fatal to the vacant mind.

Where the attention has been early engaged in fiction, it will not, without great difficulty, be turned to realities. The cauſe is obvious. It is the buſineſs of fiction to excite emotion; the mind delights in this excitement; and where it is frequently produced, whatever is deſtitute of it will appear inſipid. If, then, we would have the attention engaged in the ſervice of the intellectual faculties, and the faculties employed in the ſearch of truth, we muſt carefully

fully abſtain from introducing [illegible] unfavourable to our deſign. From the direction which is given to the power of ATTENTION, the trains of [illegible] will receive their colouring: and the [illegible] will ultimately partake of their complexion.

On the truth of what has been advanced, every perſon will [illegible] operations of his own mind: [illegible] to decide. No one will be accuſtomed to this reflection [illegible] of the power which [illegible] the mind, in numerous inſtances [illegible] correſponding to [illegible] it has been ſuppoſed. [illegible] phical the mind, the [illegible] ſociation by which [illegible] are linked together [illegible] the [illegible] the [illegible] this [illegible] ons from [illegible] He to whom [illegible] was [illegible]

intimately knew its various propenſities; foreſaw the conſequence of permitting the chain of ideas, naturally introduced by the buſineſs, the pleaſures, and the purſuits of life, to remain unbroken. He foreſaw, that by this means the heart muſt ſoon be alienated from its Maker. His wiſdom provided the remedy. "*Remember the "ſeventh day to keep it holy*," was one of the firſt injunctions given to the human race: and a little reflection will convince us, how admirably this decree was ſuited to that law of our nature, which I have above endeavoured to explain.

If our preſent occupation neceſſarily engages our attention, and our attention introduces trains of ideas allied to its object, it neceſſarily follows, that, in order to recall the attention to a contemplation of whatever is remote from the general objects of purſuit, a total change of employment is the moſt effectual means that could poſſibly be deviſed. With the *reſt* that by the

the Divine appointment took place on the ſeventh day, the ideas of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, manifeſted in the creation of the world, were inevitably aſſociated. A ſenſe of the Divine preſence was thus kept alive in the mind of man; and as long as this ſalutary inſtitution was duly obſerved, the trains of thought which it excited, failed not to produce obedience to the Divine commands. To this truth the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament gives ample evidence. We there ſee, that at whatever period the obſervation of the ſabbath fell into diſuſe, the knowledge of the one true GOD, and obedience to his moral laws, were equally forgotten. Nor where it was obſerved moſt punctually, was the obſervance of any uſe, when the aſſociations that were at firſt connected with it, were changed into a gloomy and illiberal ſuperſtition. Such was the caſe at the time of our Saviour's appearance; but far from being abrogated by him, "who

"came

"came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil," this inſtitution, founded on the nature of the human mind, and coeval with its creation, muſt continue obligatory till the nature of the human mind is changed. From the period of our Saviour's death, it preſents aſſociations ſtill more intereſting to the heart than the ideas of creating power. It is to us a perpetual memorial of an entrance into a ſtate of eternal happineſs; a returning feſtival of gratitude and joy!

Addreſſing myſelf to profeſſed Chriſtians, I ſhould not have thought it neceſſary to ſay ſo much upon this ſubject, if I had not obſerved the erroneous ideas concerning it, which now prevail. What harm is there in doing this? what ſin is there in that? is the common anſwer to every objection againſt purſuing the pleaſures or the buſineſs of life on Sunday. From the ſcope of my argument it will appear, that the *harm* and the *ſin* ariſes from perpetuating trains of thought, foreign to all that is

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of real importance to our eternal welfare. Such a total change of employment on every ſeventh day, as will ſerve to break theſe aſſociations which tie our hearts to the world, and to introduce trains of thought favourable to devotional ſentiment, to ſelf-examination, to humility, and benevolence, cannot be deemed a matter of ſmall importance; and moſt earneſtly would I recommend it to parents to accuſtom their children from infancy to this change. The change of employment ought, indeed, to be ſo managed as to produce delight; which it will never do, if Sunday be made a day of wearisome idleneſs, or of gloomy reſtraint. Let it be a day of love, of cheerfulneſs, of familiar intercourſe with your children. Let their little hearts be led to rejoice in Him who made them. Turn their attention to obſerve his goodneſs in the works of creation and providence. Make them ſenſible of the benignity which decreed a day of reſt to thoſe inferior animals,

mals, which are ſo uſeful to man: and by every means in your power, endeavour to introduce upon the day ſet apart for the ſervice of God thoſe trains of thought, which are connected with the emotions of delight and gratitude.

It has been already obſerved, how far our aſſociations are influenced by time, and place. By this law of the human mind the advantages attending public worſhip will be ſufficiently explained. Every prayer to God for Divine grace to aſſiſt us in conquering the evil diſpoſitions to which we are, alas! too prone, introduces aſſociations favourable to virtue: and if any particular hour of the day is habitually thus employed, the return of that hour will introduce theſe aſſociations to the mind. Hence the advantages of devoting the morning to religious exerciſes. The train of thoughts introduced by theſe is the beſt preſervative againſt temptation.

I leave

I leave you to purſue the ſubject in your own reflections; and be aſſured, that it is worthy of far more ſerious inveſtigation than has now been beſtowed upon it by your friend.

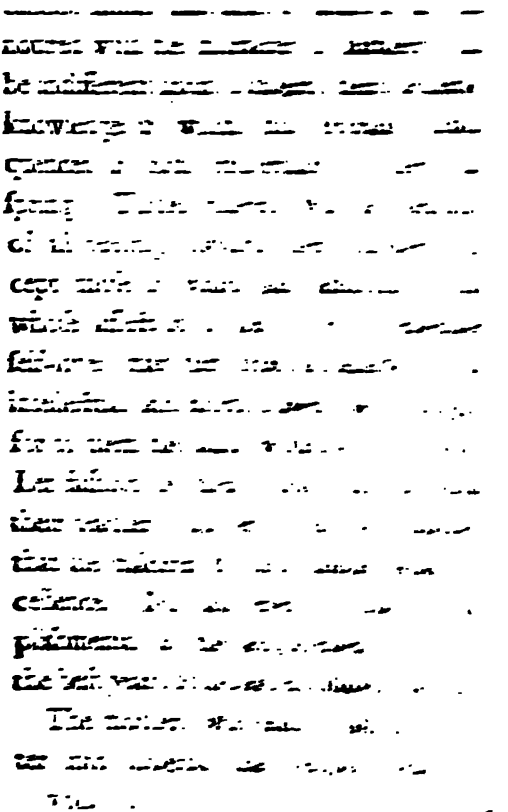
Adieu.

LETTER IV.

CONCEPTION.

Introductory Observations.—Mr. Locke's Definition of Discernment applicable to Conception.—The Evils arising from the Want of clear and accurate Ideas.—How these are to be obtained.—Conception to be exercised in early Life, on the Objects of Perception.—Books.—Peculiarity of Temperament.—The Conceptions of melancholy Persons languid.—Observations.

YOU expreſs your apprehenſion, my dear Friend, that the inveſtigation upon which I have entered, will appear too dry and unintereſting to the generality of female readers. I cannot, I confeſs, think ſo meanly of my ſex. I cannot think, that any, who have the leaſt pretenſions to rationality,



has in the conſciouſneſs of the diſadvantage under which ſhe labours, a powerful incitement to guard againſt a ſimilar obſtacle to improvement in the minds of her children. Senſible, as ſhe muſt be, that this inability ariſes from a neglect of the early cultivation of her own faculties, ſhe will be doubly aſſiduous in acquiring ſuch illumination as may direct her to the proper path of inſtruction for her infant charge. In a book on Education ſhe will not ſeek for mere amuſement; nor will ſhe caſt it aſide, becauſe it contains principles which require ſome degree of reflection to underſtand. She will go over theſe principles with attention; examine and re-examine them; comparing them all the while with her own conſciouſneſs, and her own obſervation; neither permitting herſelf to condemn, nor to approve, upon a curſory glance. Thoſe who read from ſuch motives, and with ſuch views, will, I hope, find enough in theſe Letters to engage their attention;

attention; while, fully ſenſible of the impoſſibility of blending much of the figures of fancy with ſuch ſubjects, they will pardon the writer for addreſſing the judgement rather than the imagination.

You, my dear Friend, and thoſe who like you have a ſerious intereſt in the object of our preſent inveſtigation, will now go along with me in examining the faculty of Conception; a faculty which attention to the objects of perception naturally unfolds, and which attention alone can bring to maturity.

Conception not only preſents to the mind diſtinct notions of the abſent objects of perception, but likewiſe poſſeſſes the power of combining thoſe ideas, ſo as to give us diſtinct notions of objects we have never ſeen.

The ball (or clue) of white cotton that is now before me on the table, to me is an object of perception. You, perhaps, have no ſuch object in view; but no ſooner do I mention

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I mention it, than you have a conception of its appearance. Neither of us, perhaps, ever ſaw a ball of gold thread of equal ſize; but both of us can conceive of it; and could conceive it, had we never ſeen ſuch a thing as gold thread in our lives. By our perceptions we have obtained an idea of gold; by theſe, likewiſe, we have learned the nature of ductility and tenacity. We are told, that gold is ſufficiently ductile and tenacious to be drawn out into the fineſt threads; and this we can conceive, although we never ſaw it done. Of ductility and tenacity we may have a juſt notion from experience, though we may be unacquainted with the terms by which theſe properties are expreſſed; but if we have no ſuch notion, it is not an acquaintance with the terms that will lead us to a conception of the poſſibility of converting a piece of hard and heavy metal into flexible wire or thread.

Hence,

Hence appears the importance of acquiring habits of accurate perception; ſince upon the diſtinctneſs of our perceptions, the clearneſs of our conceptions evidently depends. Attention is equally indiſpenſable to both faculties. From an habitual want of attention in examining the objects of our external ſenſes, ariſe erroneous Conceptions; hence falſe aſſociations are formed, tending to miſlead the judgment and pervert the reaſon.

That mind which can moſt juſtly and accurately reflect the images of its former perceptions, is beſt prepared for the exerciſe of all its higher faculties.

What I have here ſaid of Conception, you will perhaps think is, in ſome reſpects, equally applicable to memory. You will, however, pleaſe to obſerve, that there is this difference betwixt them: memory is employed upon the paſt, while conception includes no idea of time whatever. Without memory there could neither be conception

ception nor judgment. It is, therefore, a faculty which certainly demands the moſt aſſiduous cultivation: but as the cultivation of it ſeems to be almoſt the ſole object of modern education; and as rules for its improvement are to be met with in every treatiſe on education, I ſhall only touch upon it incidentally.

It appears to me, that much of what Mr. Locke ſays of diſcerning is ſtrictly applicable to conception. "It is not enough, ſays he, "to have a confuſed perception of "ſomething in general; unleſs the mind has "a diſtinct perception of objects and their "qualities, it would be capable of very lit-"tle knowledge. On this faculty of diſ-"tinguiſhing one thing from another de-"pends the *evidence and certainty* of ſeve-"ral even very general propoſitions which "have paſſed for innate truths." Again; "How much the imperfection of accurately "diſcriminating *ideas* one from another "lies either in the dullneſs or faults of the organs

" organs of ſenſe, or want of acuteneſs,
" exerciſe, or attention, in the underſtand-
" ing, or haſtineſs and precipitancy natural
" to ſome tempers, I will not here ex-
" amine; it ſuffices to take notice, that this
" is one of the operations that the mind
" may reflect on, and obſerve in itſelf. It
" is of that conſequence to its other know-
" ledge, that *ſo far as this faculty is in it-*
" *ſelf dull, or not rightly made uſe of*, for the
" diſtinguiſhing one thing from another,
" *ſo far are our notions confuſed*, and our
" reaſon and judgment diſturbed or miſled."

All the foregoing paſſage applies, I think, to the conceptions. The faculty may be in itſelf either dull and languid; or from habitual inattention to the objects of perception, upon which it firſt begins to operate, it may be inaccurate and confuſed. In the memory of perſons whoſe conceptions are, from any of the above-mentioned cauſes, languid and indiſtinct, every thing ſeems to be ſtored in confuſion.

Where

Where there is no accuracy of conception, the power of retention is of very little uſe. We clearly ſee inſtances of people who remember things as if it were by halves, and in their repetition of the obſervations or of the occurrences that have been related by others, they go on floundering from error to error, and without any intention to deceive, are perpetually guilty of the moſt flagrant miſrepreſentation. Hence ariſe many, if not all, of thoſe petty ſtrifes, jealouſies, and reſentments, which are moſt inimical to the happineſs of ſocial life.

As without juſt and accurate conceptions the true meaning of an author can never be diſcovered; to perſons who labour under this confuſion of ideas, reading, inſtead of being a ſource of improvement, is the very reverſe. Unhappy the author, whoſe writings are ſubjected to the criticiſm of readers of this claſs! From the confuſion of their own ideas, they are for

ever

ever miſtaking or perverting the meaning of others; and totally unconſcious of their own want of diſcernment, they ſcruple not to decide and to pronounce with confidence upon what they do not underſtand.

The mind whoſe conceptions are in general clear and accurate, will not be forward in pronouncing a deciſive opinion, upon a ſlight and partial inveſtigation of any ſubject whatever: it is miſconception that, in many inſtances, gives riſe to prejudice, and to injuſtice.

As accurate conception is alike neceſſary to the acquirement of knowledge, and to the practice of candour and humility, I ſhall make no apology for dwelling upon the ſubject at ſome length; pointing out the cauſes, from which, as I apprehend, a deficiency in this faculty generally proceeds; and giving ſuch hints as may be uſeful to its improvement in early life.

This faculty in a particular manner partakes of the diſpoſitions of the mind. It accords

accords with the tone of the paſſions; and as theſe incline to the cheerful or the melancholy, the conceptions will generally be found to be lively or languid. What gives ſtrength to this concluſion is, that upon ſubjects which correſpond to the tone of the affections, the conceptions of the dulleſt perſon are ſufficiently acute.

A ſelfiſh perſon, whoſe ideas upon every other ſubject are languid and confuſed, will have clear and diſtinct conceptions of all that relates to ſelf-intereſt. I have known thoſe who could not by any means be made to comprehend the ſimpleſt propoſition upon any ſubject of ſcience; whoſe ideas of the affairs, the feelings, and the intereſts, of others, were ſo faint and languid as to be with difficulty recalled; who, nevertheleſs, had ſuch clear and accurate conceptions upon whatever promiſed to gratify their own avarice or ambition, that they could, in theſe points, enter with eaſe into the moſt elaborate

elaborate diſquiſition, purſue the moſt intricate chain of reaſoning, or follow the longeſt ſeries of calculations. It is evident from hence, that the dulneſs of conceptions upon other ſubjects was not the defect of Nature, but originated in the predominance of ſelfiſhneſs—an affection, which, wherever it prevails, engroſſes the powers of attention.

And here let it be remarked, that in all the ſelfiſh and diſſocial paſſions, ſuch as envy, jealouſy, rancour, &c. the flow of the ideas is dull and languid; and that wherever theſe paſſions predominate, the conceptions are never ſtrong and lively. How great, then, is the folly of parents, who, while they wiſh their children to be poſſeſſed of wiſdom and knowledge, pay no attention to the birth of thoſe paſſions, which preſent the moſt inſuperable bar to the accompliſhment of their wiſhes!

Pride is a paſſion not particularly attached to any peculiar tone of diſpoſition.

It

It attacks the lively and the ſerious, the ſelfiſh and benevolent; but its operation upon the powers of conception, in theſe oppoſite characters, is eſſentially different. In ſtrong and vigorous minds, pride ſometimes ſtimulates to the deſire of knowledge. In this caſe it adds ſtrength to the power of conception; attention is then exerted, and exerted with effect. By means of this paſſion operating on an ardent mind, the taſk of inſtruction may doubtleſs be rendered eaſy to the tutor. By him, therefore, whoſe ſole object is to give his pupil knowledge, pride muſt be conſidered in the light of an uſeful auxiliary. To thoſe who conſider the perfection of the moral character as an object of ſtill greater importance than the attainment of any, or even of all, the intellectual accompliſhments, pride will appear in other colours; nor will they wiſh their children to pluck of the tree of knowledge, like our firſt parents, at the ſuggeſtion of a fiend!

Where

Where pride unites itſelf to the timid and low-ſpirited, no conceptions will be found lively or vigorous, excepting ſuch as correſpond with the tone of the accordant paſſions. While upon ſuch minds the recital of great and noble actions, inſtances of the moſt exalted generoſity, and of the moſt diſtintereſted benevolence, make little or no impreſſion;—the conceptions are lively, with regard to the ſlighteſt indication of contempt; they are vigorous in the repreſentation of injury or injuſtice; and wherever pride or ſelf-love are concerned, they are uncommonly vivid.

Where a tendency to envy or malignity pervades the mind, the conception will be languid with regard to all that is ſublime or beautiful, either in moral actions or ſentiment; whilſt with eagle eye it will ſeize on every blemiſh. This, as has been already hinted, is the inevitable conſequence of the direction given to attention, for in that direction alone will the conceptions be vigorous.

Wiſely

Wiſely has it been ordered by Nature, that the power of conception ſhould appear in the mind at ſo early a period, as to admit of its being cultivated to ſome degree of perfection, before the diſſocial paſſions have any abiding influence in the heart. The more this faculty is exerciſed upon material objects in early life, the leſs chance will theſe paſſions have of gaining an aſcendancy. The works of Nature and of Art preſent an inexhauſtible ſource of ideas to thoſe who are taught to examine them with attention: and where the attention is thus directed, the trains of thought introduced into the mind will be of an oppoſite nature from thoſe which produce turbulent emotion.

The manner in which children deſcribe what they have ſeen or learned, affords the beſt criterion that I know of, whereby to eſtimate the ſtrength and vigour of conception. By requiring clear and accurate deſcriptions, we do much more to invigorate this

this faculty, than by the all ſet leſſons in the world. Children, who have never been exerciſed in this way, are at firſt at a great loſs for expreſſion; and it is no ſmall advantage to the mind to be thus ſet to work for words to expreſs the new ideas it has acquired. A little aſſiſtance may at firſt be not only uſeful, but neceſſary. But of aſſiſtance in this way the parent ought never to be laviſh; as it is one of the greateſt drawbacks upon the improvement of the infant faculties, that teachers, to ſave themſelves trouble, tell all, and leave the children to tell nothing.

I have formerly noticed, that the quickneſs or the ſlowneſs of the courſe of our ideas depends much upon the diſpoſition of the mind to melancholy or cheerfulneſs. Childhood is naturally cheerful, and the flow of ideas at that period of life is conſequently rapid. Nature has wiſely ordained that it ſhould be ſo. The power of reflection, by which we in a manner arreſt

reſt ideas in their courſe, is not then brought forth; ſo that at this period of life children could not avail themſelves of the ſlower ſucceſſion of ideas to increaſe their knowledge.

As the ideas of children are few, and as the courſe of theſe ideas is rapid, it follows, that the ſame ideas muſt frequently paſs through the mind. Here, likewiſe, I obſerve a wiſe proviſion made by Nature for the cultivation of the firſt faculties that appear, and in the cultivation of which the ſtrength of the other faculties ultimately depends. Incapable of long and fixed attention to any object, a repetition of the ſame ideas is abſolutely neceſſary to the the due operation of theſe powers. This circumſtance I believe to be very little attended to. We judge too much of the minds of children by our own; our ideas, except when under the influence of ſome of the exhilarating paſſions, flow in ſlow ſucceſſion. The frequent repetition of the

ſame

ſame idea is to us unnatural, and conſequently irkſome; hence we raſhly conclude that it muſt be the ſame with children. We therefore injudiciouſly preſs new ideas upon them before the mind is prepared for their reception; and by doing ſo, we often render inaccurate conception habitual.

Viewing the ſubject in this light, I conſider the multitude of little books that are now given to children at an early age, as ſo many deſtroyers of their faculties. If the conceptions have not acquired vigour by being exerciſed on material objects, before they are employed on thoſe emotions which it is the buſineſs of fiction to deſcribe, I greatly apprehend that they will never be cultivated to perfection. The only books, therefore, that are fit for children, are ſuch as convey clear, juſt, and accurate ideas upon ſubjects to which the attention at that period ought chiefly to be directed. Nor will the books that are beſt calculated for aiding the infant mind in the acquirement

of juſt ideas, be of any uſe, unleſs the ideas they give be permitted to make a due impreſſion, which they never can do at a ſuperficial glance.

The *half* conceptions which a child at firſt forms from the beſt book that can be put into its hands, may prove equally injurious to its mind, as the erroneous ideas conveyed by works that are leſs judicious. By frequent and repeated peruſals it is, and by theſe alone, that a child can attain a clear and diſtinct comprehenſion of the meaning of even the moſt trifling ſtory; nor will this re-peruſal appear to a child, as it would do to us, tireſome and inſipid, unleſs its appetite for novelty has been excited by too frequent gratification.

Obſerve with what delight an infant liſtens to the ſame tale that has been a hundred times repeated by his nurſe, and a hundred times is heard with ever-new delight. In the limited number of the child's ideas, and in the velocity with which they

paſs

paſs through the mind, we may ſee the cauſe of this unſatiated pleaſure received from the repetition of the ſame fooliſh tale. To theſe oral communications books ſucceed; and it would be well if both tales and books were always calculated to aſſiſt the opening faculties, to awaken the benevolent affections, to give a proper direction to curioſity, and to inſpire an early love of knowledge and virtue. In the "*Evenings at Home*, or *Juvenile Budget*," all this appears to me to be effected in its utmoſt extent; and I am well convinced, that the child, who, from the time of its being able to read for itſelf with pleaſure, till its eighth or ninth year, is reſtricted to theſe books alone for its literary amuſement, will, at the end of that period, be found poſſeſſed of a greater number of clear and diſtinct ideas, and of a greater vigour of conception, than one that has run over all the inſtructive and entertaining ſtories that were ever written for children of that age.

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In ſpeaking of the books that are *read* by children, you will pleaſe to obſerve, that I reſtrict my meaning to thoſe which they peruſe of their own accord for their own amuſement. The books which they read as leſſons, I conſider as diſtinct from theſe. The child, who never opens a book but as a taſk, muſt have been the victim of neglect or miſmanagement. Nature ſo ſtrongly impels the young mind to ſeek the acquirement of new ideas, that if the curioſity ſhe has implanted be entirely quenched, we may be aſſured that this has not been effected without ſome pains on our part. But curioſity, though not eaſily effaced, may be eaſily directed to low and grovelling objects; and it is not without ſome pains that it can be turned into thoſe channels, where its activity will be truly uſeful. I have ſeen a little girl, whoſe burning curioſity no drawer that contained a piece of finery could eſcape; who would riſk diſgrace and puniſhment to gratify herſelf by peeping

peeping into the trunk or cloſet, which was prohibited to her approach; and who would yet evince ſuch manifeſt indifference towards information of every other kind, that it was impoſſible to rouſe in her a wiſh for inſtruction. Such is the conſequence of the early direction given to curioſity.

The firſt ſtep to clear and accurate conception, is the careful examination of material objects. Without this, the conceptions obtained from deſcription muſt be languid and confuſed. Where the perceptive faculty has been ſufficiently exerciſed, the conceptions obtained by the deſcription of abſent objects, or of the feelings and ſenſations of others, will be ſufficiently lively, provided the language in which they are conveyed be ſufficiently intelligible. So many meanings are, through the poverty of language, attached to the ſame word, as to be the means of occaſioning much confuſion in the ideas of thoſe of riper years: and I believe it often happens, that where a falſe

a falſe aſſociation has been attached in infancy to a word not in common uſe, it remains indelible to the lateſt period of life. I was told by a Gentleman of no common endowments, that in reading to his mother when a child ſomething concerning the Patriarchs, he blundered on the word *partridges*. His mother ſet him right, but without any explanation of the meaning of the term patriarch: ſo that when it next occurred, inſtead of venturing to pronounce it, he called out, "here mamma "are theſe *queer fowl* again!" Again ſhe taught him to pronounce the word, but without deſtroying the aſſociation that had been formed, by clear explanation; ſo that it continued ſo far to operate, as that whenever he afterwards heard the word patriarch, the idea of partridges preſented itſelf to his imagination.

Moſt words that are not in ſuch common uſe as to be familiar at an early period, are capable of definition: and much pains ought

dearing in the gentleneſs which commonly attends this langour of ſpirits, that it naturally inſpires tenderneſs. This tenderneſs is encreaſed by that helpleſſneſs which clings to the maternal boſom for ſupport. But if this tenderneſs be not enlightened and guided by reaſon, it will prepare a never-ending fund of miſery for its unhappy object.

The inevitable effect of indulgence in generating ſelfiſhneſs, I have explained at large in the former volume: and as ſelfiſhneſs is the never-failing concomitant of the diſpoſition above deſcribed: it follows, that it is the particular duty of the parent to guard againſt nurturing and increaſing this natural tendency.

From the languid flow of ideas in the low-ſpirited proceeds an indolence of mind, which terminates in torpid apathy. Selfiſhneſs is then the ſole ſpring of action: benevolence may dwell upon the tongue; but no feelings, no affections, but ſuch as are connected with ſelf-love, ever touch the

the heart. Such an one finds friendſhip neceſſary to his ſupport, to his comfort, nay to his very exiſtence. He therefore clings to his friends with fondneſs; but what conſolation, what comfort, what ſupport, does he afford them in return? Does he enter with the ſame intereſt into the feelings of others, with which he expects others to enter into his? No. But this deficiency of feeling does not proceed from a want of benevolence or of attachment. It proceeds from a want of conception with regard to every thing that does not concern ſelf. How would many of our acquaintances ſtart at the picture that is here drawn, if applied to themſelves! Let us make a more uſeful application of it to thoſe who are yet at a period of life, when the evils I have here pourtrayed admit of remedy.

In the education of children who indicate a tendency to this diſpoſition, whether ſuch tendency be hereditary or acquired, particular

ticular pains ſhould be taken to lead the mind to attend to the feelings of others. Whatever ſervices, whatever attentions they exact from others, they ſhould be obliged in their turn to pay. If they are once permitted to imagine, that from the ſoftneſs and delicacy of their diſpoſitions, they have any right of exemption from the rule of "doing to others as they "would have others do by them," they are inevitably ruined. It is eſſential in ſuch caſes to uſe every means to increaſe the flow of ideas. Lively and exhilarating images ought inceſſantly to be preſented to the mind, and inſtead of encouraging that diſpoſition to ſtudy, which frequently appears prematurely in ſuch perſons, the mind ought to be rouſed to active and vigorous exertion. Whatever knowledge it acquires, it ought to be made freely to communicate, for unleſs this be done, reading will be, to ſuch a mind, only another mode of indulging indolence. To conquer

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the indolence that invariably adheres to ſuch diſpoſitions, every effort ought to be made. Theſe efforts ought to be unceaſing; and their efficacy will be much encreaſed by frequently changing the attention from object to object. The variety and beauty of the material world will here be powerfully aſſiſtant to the tutor's views. While the perceptive faculties are thus exerciſed, the mind cannot ſink into apathy, or indulge in the luxury of indolent reverie. It will by theſe means, likewiſe, acquire that command of attention which is in all caſes ſo eminently uſeful.

The perſon who has been ſo happy as to have attained the power of ſubmitting the attention to the control of will, is in poſſeſſion of an infallible remedy againſt many of the cares, and all the minor miſeries, of life. He who can turn his attention to the griefs or the joys of others, will never become the prey of ſelfiſh ſorrow. Even in the langour of ſickneſs, and under the preſſure

preſſure of ſevere pain, we have known people, who were capable of directing their attentions to ſubjects remote from ſelf. This power over the attention is particularly difficult of attainment to the naturally timid and low-ſpirited. It is, however, to them peculiarly neceſſary: and no pains ought to be ſpared to put them in poſſeſſion of it.

The devout affections, beſides being of the utmoſt moment to ſuch characters, as offering them a ſource of continual ſupport and conſolation, will, if cheerful ideas be aſſociated with them, prove eſſentially inſtrumental to fortitude. Before the devout and the benevolent affections the diſpoſition to ſelfiſhneſs vaniſhes, as the clouds of morning before the radiant ſun. Let the ſuſceptibility of the mind be cultivated under theſe auſpicious beams. Be it endeavoured to render its conceptions of the ſublime and beautiful ſo clear and diſtinct, as to render the mind alive to the emotions

tions of ſublimity and beauty, as often as opportunities of calling them forth recur: and, by theſe means, you will cultivate taſte, invigorate the intellect, give new animation to the ſpirits, and render a character, which would, by injudicious management and ſoothing indulgence, have ſunk into inſignificance, happy in itſelf, and uſeful to ſociety.

Another and a powerful motive to the diligent improvement of the faculty now under conſideration, will be found in the aſſiſtance to be derived from it in inculcating a firm adherence to truth. Falſhood is the vice of weak and timid minds. To thoſe whoſe conceptions are languid and confuſed, it is impoſſible that miſrepreſentation can ever appear in a very atrocious light. In theſe miſrepreſentations they are utterly unconſcious how far they depart from the truth, becauſe of the truth they have no diſtinct idea: and it is impoſſible, in conſequence, to convince them of the turpitude

turpitude of falſifying. By obtaining clear conceptions, and by being accuſtomed to give an accurate account of the conceptions it acquires, the mind becomes habituated to truth; at the ſame time that the diſtance betwixt truth and falſhood becomes in ſuch minds actually enlarged, and the difficulty of departing from one to the other is conſequently increaſed.

The confuſed and inaccurate conceptions of the vulgar, ariſing from a total neglect of this faculty in their early education, renders them for ever liable to the vice of lying. Cunning takes its riſe from the ſame ſource: and though many a departure from truth may be laid to the charge of *vanity*, I believe we ſhall generally find, that where the conceptions are clear, diſtinct, and vigorous, the character will be upright and ſincere.

Adieu.

LETTER V.

CONCEPTION

Possessed in different Degrees of Vigour.—How it may best be cultivated in those of slow Capacity.—Exemplified in a Variety of Instances.—Difference betwixt a Memory of Perception, and the Recollection of Ideas.—The Advantage of cultivating the latter.—Illustrations.

THE greateſt difference that exiſts with reſpect to intellect betwixt individuals, whoſe organs of perception are equally perfect, will be found to conſiſt in the vigour or the weakneſs of the faculty of Conception. That this faculty is imparted by nature in very different proportions to the human race, will probably be acknowledged by all who argue leſs from theory than experience. Like all the other

other intellectual faculties, it is, however, capable of ſo much improvement, that where it is poſſeſſed but in a very moderate degree, it may, by careful cultivation, be ſo ſtrengthened and improved, as to conquer the deficiency; while by contrary management, the conceptions which were naturally lively and vigorous, may, for want of uſe, become faint and languid.

To point out the moſt likely method of ſucceeding in the cultivation of this faculty, where it appears in a weak and imperfect ſtate, ſhall be the ſubject of this letter; and as the hints I ſhall offer, are all the fruits of real obſervation, I feel ſome degree of confidence in propoſing them.

The ſource of many errors upon this point is the vanity and partiality of parents, which will not permit them to ſee, or to acknowledge, even to themſelves, that their children can poſſibly be deficient in any faculty. Willing to be deceived, they permit prattling vivacity to impoſe upon

upon them as proofs of quickneſs of apprehenſion; and ape-like imitation to paſs upon them for acute judgment.

When theſe lively prattlers advance in years, people are ſurpriſed that what they looked upon as the promiſe of genius, ſhould end in dulneſs and ſtupidity. Inſtead of this blind and ever misjudging partiality, would it not be better for parents accurately to examine and to appreciate the faculties of their children; that ſo by an attentive cultivation, the barren ſoil, whoſe gaudy weeds pleaſed the eye and amuſed the fancy, might be rendered really productive, and enabled to bring its fruits to maturity?

Children of ſlow capacity require ſo much attention, ſuch unwearied patience, ſuch unremitting aſſiduity, that maternal affection is alone equal to the taſk. The particular attention which they require, it were folly to expect from any leſs intereſted than a mother. But richly muſt

the mother be compenſated, who, by her judicious labours, reſcues the child of her affections from the degrading ſtate of ignorance and imbecillity. When ſhe reflects, that inſtead of the rational companion, the ſteady friend, the prudent adviſer, whom ſhe now finds in her child; the ſame child would, by a conduct leſs judicious on her part, have been doomed to grope through life in a ſtate of helpleſs ignorance; enviable muſt be her feelings!

The mother, who, by attending to the early education of her children, gives herſelf a real title to the maternal character, has, in the cultivation of their faculties, a great and manifeſt advantage over every other preceptor.

"She knows each chord, its various tone—
"Each ſpring, its various bias."

She is intimately acquainted with the progreſs, nay with the very number of their ideas, and thus poſſeſſes the maſter-key of their minds. Shame on her, who careleſsly throws

throws it aſide, and indolently permits the only gate that opens to improvement, to be ſhut for ever!

Though the perceptions may appear quick where the apprehenſion is ſlow, yet I am inclined to believe, that in this caſe, they will, upon examination, be found to be neither diſtinct nor accurate. Great pains ought, therefore, to be taken with children of ſlow capacity, to invigorate their perceptions. Without great pains they will not receive the ſame number of ideas from external objects, with children of more lively parts: and as theſe ideas are the foundation of all intellectual improvement, it follows of courſe, that where they are imperfect, or few in number, the diſadvantage can never be remedied. To call the attention to the examination of external objects, and to aid the mind in forming conceptions concerning them, is therefore of infinitely more importance in the caſe under conſideration, than is generally imagined.

gined. The parent, who is much with her child, has this branch of education always in her power. Materials for it are ever at hand. The world of Nature, and the works of Art, are equally ſubſervient to her purpoſe. Let us give an inſtance.

Mother. " My dear, you are looking at the carpet, I ſee. Well, now, try if you can tell me of what it is made."

Child. 'I don't know, mamma.'

Mother. " Examine it better. Feel it. Is it hard, like the floor?"

Child. 'No. It is ſoft, and it is prettier than the floor.'

Mother. " Its colours have nothing to do with the queſtion; the carpet would be as good a carpet, though not ſo pretty a one, if it had never been dyed at all. Look at it again, and try if you can find out what it is made of."

Child. 'I now ſee threads in it. I believe it is made of big threads!'

Mother. " You are partly right; but are theſe threads made of the ſame mate-

rials as the thread with which I am now ſewing. Come and look at it."

Child. 'No. I ſee there is a difference; and the threads that make the carpet, are red, blue, and green.'

Mother. "The colours are of no conſequence, let us not think of them at all. Let us examine a thread of the carpet, without minding the colour: and ſee, here is one; compare it with mine, and tell me where you perceive a difference."

Child. 'It is bigger and ſofter.'

Mother. "The ſoftneſs may lead you to gueſs, of what it is made."

Child. 'I believe it is made of wool.'

Mother. "And what is wool? Where, or how, does it grow?"

Child. 'I cannot tell.'

Mother. "Wool grows upon the backs of ſheep. It is clipped off every year with large ſciſſars; and after being waſhed and carded, is ſpun into yarn, which you call threads."

Child.

Child. 'Well, mamma, tell me more.'

Mother. "It is then ſent to the dyer, who dyes one part yellow, another green, and ſo on. It then goes to the weaver, and he weaves it by a pattern, as you ſee. And now you underſtand that the colour is mere matter of choice or fancy; but that it is not abſolutely neceſſary, like the wool, or the ſpinning, or the weaving."

Child. 'Yes. I underſtand all this very well.'

Mother. "Do you think you will be able to tell me this over again to-morrow."

Child. 'Yes. I could tell it all now.'

Mother. "No, not now, but I ſhould like to hear it again to-morrow; and then we ſhall go and look at the ſheep, and their pretty lambs; and you ſhall learn all about them."

All this may poſſibly appear highly nonſenſical to thoſe who think it is by books and taſks that every thing is to be learned. We may, however, venture to aſſert, that all

all the above converſation might be read as a leſſon by a child of ſlow capacity, without its having the ſmalleſt conception of its meaning, or acquiring a ſingle idea upon the ſubject; while given as I have deſcribed it, diſtinct and accurate notions are acquired by means of the perceptive faculties. It is by theſe, and theſe alone, that the conceptions of dull children are to be invigorated; and this not without much pains and trouble on the part of the preceptor.

The difficulty which a ſtupid child finds in attending to the letters, the words, the ſtops, and the ſentences, renders it altogether impoſſible that it ſhould derive any new ideas from this ſource. While this difficulty ſubſiſts, all the little attention which it can command, will be abſorbed in attempts at reading with propriety. The exertion of this attention is ſo diſguſting to a torpid mind, as to create wearineſs and averſion. Nor can we wonder at this, when

when we conſider that the perception of every letter is a diſtinct operation of the mind; that its ſound is another, and muſt be aſſociated with the figure of the letter; and that words are cluſters of theſe aſſociations, as ſentences are of words. Where the power of conception is weak, the power of aſſociation muſt be proportionally defective; is it not, then, unreaſonable to expect the operation of this faculty, before we have been at any pains to ſecure the aſſiſtance of its forerunner? And ſhould we, by dint of perſeverance, of allurement, or of coercion, ſucceed in making the child a reader before the faculty of conception is ſo far opened as to enable it to receive any ideas from what it reads, what do we gain by it? *We* may, indeed, gain the pleaſure of *thinking*, that the child makes ſome progreſs in learning; but in reality, *it* gains nothing; of progreſs, it makes none.

While the learning to read in thus operoſe, I ſhould think it better not to attempt it;

it; nor deem it any loſs if the child ſhould remain ignorant of its letters, even for two or three years beyond the period, when children of a more ready apprehenſion may be taught to read with fluency and preciſion.

If, indeed, in the interim, it learns nothing; if the mother indolently acquieſces in the ſlow growth of its faculties, and inſtead of being actively aſſiſtant in their developement, amuſes herſelf in the prattle of words without meaning, the child will be little the better for procraſtinating the period of books and taſks. But if, inſtead of forcing the backward plant, ſhe zealouſly endeavours to enrich the ſoil, her pains will be amply repaid. By a careful cultivation of the perceptions, by rouſing indolence, and ſtimulating curioſity, the mind will be gradually expanded for the reception of new ideas. The eaſier branches of natural philoſophy, and the ſimple principles of mechanics, will be found excellent

lent aſſiſtants in opening the mind; and you may take it for granted, that a child of ſlow parts will be much more advantageouſly employed in learning the nature and properties of the objects around from the lips of a ſenſible and affectionate parent, than in ineffectual attempts at learning the *ſigns of words*.

Children are all, in ſome degree, imitative animals; but as the intellectual powers develope, as the number of ideas increaſes, as the attention is awakened to an examination of the works of Art and Nature, and as judgment begins to be called into action, the principle of imitation is diminiſhed, or appears to be ſo, as it comes under the direction of judgment. The child of ſlow parts, to the improvement of whoſe faculties no proper attention has been paid, will remain a merely imitative creature during life. By imitation it will learn the uſe of words, and, if it is much in company with grown-up people, of words that are not uſually found

found in the vocabulary of children. One cannot but ſmile to obſerve, how eaſily parents are deceived by this quality of imitation in their children. While the ſententious obſervations of the little prater, ſtrike an intelligent obſerver with pity and diſguſt, they liſten to the infant oracle with complacency and delight! Affectation is the never-failing conſequence of this; affectation, which not all the graces and accompliſhments can render tolerable, is thus united with folly and ignorance! The poor child remains unconſcious of this union; it is deſtitute of conceptions whereby it can apprehend the incongruity; and where the conceptions are very dull, the nice feelings of propriety cannot exiſt.

It is by a lively ſenſe of the impreſſions which our words and actions make upon others, that our manners are chiefly formed. Thoſe who have not a lively perception of what thoſe feelings are, muſt be for ever erring againſt propriety. How many admirable

mirable ſketches upon this ſubject have we from the inimitable pen of Shakeſpeare! Hotſpur's deſcription of this ſpecies of impropriety in a ſelf-conceited coxcomb has never been equalled, and can never be excelled. The paſſage is too long for inſertion; and is beſides ſo well known, that it will be immediately recollected by the greater number of readers.

Another ſtriking inſtance of the ſame want of conception, with regard to the impreſſion made upon others, is given in the following paſſage, which, as an elucidation of my remarks, I ſhall beg leave to tranſcribe. The ſcene is in the "Merry Wives of Windſor," when Anne Page enters to inform Slender that dinner waited for him; to which he replies:—

Slen. No, I thank, forſooth, heartily; I am very well.

Anne. The dinner attends you, ſir.

Slen. I am not hungry, I thank you, forſooth. Go, ſirrah, [to *Simple*] *for all you are my man,* go wait upon my couſin *Shallow:* a juſtice of peace

peace may ſometimes be beholden to his friend for a man. I keep but three men and a boy *yet*, till my mother be dead; but what though, yet I live like a poor gentleman born.

Anne. I may not go in without your worſhip; they will not ſit, till you come.

Slen. I'faith, I'll eat nothing; I thank you as much as though I did.

Anne. I pray you, ſir, walk in.

Slen. I had rather walk here, I thank you: I bruiſed my ſhin t' other day with playing at ſword and dagger with a maſter of fence, three venevs for a diſh of ſtew'd prunes; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the ſmell of hot meat ſince. Why do your dogs bark ſo? be there bears i' th' town?

Anne. I think there are, ſir; I heard them talk'd of.

Slen. I love the ſport well, but I ſhall as ſoon quarrel at it as any man in England. You are afraid, if you ſee the bear looſe, are you not?

Anne. Aye, indeed, ſir.

Slen. That's meat and drink to me now! I have ſeen Sackerſon looſe twenty times, and have taken him by the chain; but I warrant you the women have ſo cried and ſhrieked at it, that it paſt; but women, indeed, cannot abide them, they are very ill-favoured rough things.

Do we not ſee in this lubberly block-head all the marks of a weak and ſpoiled child, who had been encouraged by the good lady his mother into an idea of his own importance? Deſtitute of all conception with regard to the impreſſions that his diſcourſe would make on a poliſhed or intelligent mind, the means he takes to convey an idea of his conſequence, of his wealth, his courage, and his delicacy, all tend to make him truly ridiculous. Not more ridiculous, however, than we have ſeen many a fooliſh Miſs, in endeavouring to give an opinion of her ſenſibility by the expreſſion of ſilly fears; of her delicacy, by bombaſtical ſentiment; or of her wiſdom, by delivering out-of-place opinions with a decided and conſequential air.

Perſons whoſe conceptions are naturally dull and weak, muſt inevitably be expoſed to all this ridiculous deportment, if great pains be not taken to prevent the ſpecies of ſelf-impoſition that gives riſe to it. It

is,

is, therefore, highly incumbent upon thoſe who have the guardianſhip of children of ſlow capacity, to uſe every means of awakening their attention to the feelings, rather than to the manners, of others. To diſcourage groſs and palpable imitation, to inſpire modeſty, and to promote that ſimplicity of manners which is its inſeparable companion.

We may endeavour to do this by leſſons; but the attempt will be vain, the labour fruitleſs. We may lecture upon propriety for ever; but where the conceptions are ſo dull as to impart no intuitive feeling of the conceptions of others, affectation and formality will be the reſult of all our pains. The behaviour of children who have been thus lectured into good-breeding, is always ſtiff and formal; and the difficulty of changing habits that are thus formed is ſo great, that the ridicule of companions is, perhaps, the only means by which a change can be ever afterwards effected.

It

It is not by lectures, therefore, that the manners of ſuch children as we now ſpeak of, (or indeed of any children) ought to be formed. Children that are quick of apprehenſion will imperceptibly form their own; but thoſe of a contrary character ought to be made ſenſible of every impropriety at the moment of committing it. If this is done from a very early age, habits of propriety will be early formed: ſo that they will neither offend by rudeneſs, nor diſguſt by formality and affectation. No habits will, however, be of any avail in regulating their conduct according to the laws of prudence and decorum in after-life, but in proportion as the faculty of conception has been opened and improved. Upon this the taſte, the judgment, and all the intellectual powers, alike depend.

A young perſon will naturally ſeek the ſociety of thoſe whoſe converſation it has faculties to comprehend. The tattle of the vulgar and the illiterate come within this deſcription,

deſcription, the vulgar and illiterate will therefore be the choſen companions of the hours of relaxation. Hence low cunning, diſguiſe, hypocriſy, and all the little meanneſſes which render a character deteſtable and odious. And all this may be the reſult of that blind partiality and ſelf-indulging indolence, which either will not ſee the deficiency of a child in intellectual endowments, or ſeeing, will not take the trouble to remedy!

By timely attention in very early life, every thing ſhort of idiocy may be improved. Gentleneſs, patience, and aſſiduity, are indeed all eſſential to the due performance of the important taſk; but by gentleneſs, patience, and aſſiduity, I have ſeen wonders performed upon minds which were apparently in a ſtate of the moſt hopeleſs imbecillity.

It is abſolutely neceſſary in this caſe, for the tutor to ſubdue all quickneſs of temper, all irritability of feeling; for by theſe

the ſtupidity of the pupil will inevitably be increaſed. It is eaſy to conceive what a wretched tutor ſuch a character as Rouſſeau muſt have made to a lad of ſlow parts; we accordingly find, by his own accounts, that he left his pupils more ſtupid than he found them.

It at firſt view appears extraordinary, that where the power of conception is very dull, the memory ſhould, with reſpect to ſome things, be tenacious; while, with reſpect to others, it is altogether deficient. A very ſlow child will often be found to get leſſons by heart as ſoon as, nay ſometimes ſooner, than one who is ten times as intelligent. But let ſuch time elapſe, as that the *words* of the leſſon are forgotten by both, and then examine them upon its ſubſtance; you will then find, that the child of ſlow conception has not one idea remaining upon the ſubject; all is obliterated, as compleatly as if the leſſon had never been heard of. The child of quick capacity,

city, on the contrary, though it has likewiſe forgotten the exact words, remembers ſomething of the meaning which they conveyed. Does not this clearly prove, that the memory of the firſt was entirely confined to its perceptions; while the ſecond, who had exerciſed upon the ſubject of its leſſon ſome degree of conception and judgment, could recall the ideas conveyed by thoſe, when the particular ſounds of the words had eſcaped the memory.

From the foregoing and ſimilar obſervations, it appears to me, that memory may be divided into two diſtinct branches, as it is employed on the objects of perception, or on the conceptions. It is with diffidence that I riſk an obſervation, in which I am not (as far as I know) ſupported by any philoſophical writer; I would, therefore, have what I ſay upon the ſubject conſidered merely in the light of a ſuggeſtion worthy of examination by the inſtructors of youth.

Mr.

Mr. Locke ſays of memory as follows: "Memory, in an intellectual creature, is "neceſſary in the next degree to Percep- "tion. It is of ſo great moment, that where "it is wanting, all the reſt of our faculties "are in a great meaſure uſeleſs; and we in "our thoughts, reaſonings, and knowledge, "could not proceed beyond preſent ob- "jects, were it not for the aſſiſtance of our "memories, wherein there may be *two de-* "*fects*. *Firſt*, that it loſes the idea quite; "and ſo far it produces perfect ignorance. "*Secondly*, that it moves ſlowly, and re- "trieves not the ideas that it has, and are "laid up in ſtore, quick enough to ſerve "the mind upon occaſions. This, if it be "in a great degree, is *ſtupidity;* and he, "who through this default in his memory, "has not the ideas that are really preſerved "there, ready at hand when need and oc- "caſion calls for them, were almoſt as good "be without them quite, ſince they ſerve "him to very little purpoſe. The dull man,

who

" who loſes the opportunity whilſt he is " ſeeking in his mind for thoſe ideas that " ſhould ſerve his turn, is not much more " happy in his knowledge than one that is " perfectly ignorant.

Again. " This faculty of laying up and " retaining the ideas that are brought into " the mind, ſeveral *other animals* ſeem to have " to a great degree as well as man. For, " to paſs by other inſtances, birds learning " of tunes, and the endeavours one may " obſerve in them to hit the notes right, " put it paſt doubt with me, they have " perception, and retain ideas in their me- " mories, and uſe them for patterns. For " it ſeems to me impoſſible, that they ſhould " endeavour to conform their voices to " notes, (as 'tis plain they do) if they had " no ideas."

It appears to me, that the former of the above quoted paſſages, viz. the account of the peculiar defects of memory, applies excluſively to the memory of our former *conceptions*,

ceptions, and that the want of the power of recalling them is, in all theſe inſtances, owing, not to the weakneſs of memory, properly ſpeaking, but to the weakneſs of the faculty of conception. The languid and confuſed ideas that are received upon any ſubject by a weak mind, muſt be eaſily obliterated. They are, like our morning dreams, vivid for a moment, but which fade imperceptibly away, "nor leave a wreck behind."

What this illuſtrious author has obſerved of the memory of animals in the laſt quoted paſſage, is, I think, entirely applicable to that memory of our perceptions, betwixt which and the memory of our conceptions there is, as I apprehend, a ſpecific difference. Ideots and brutes remember the impreſſions made upon their ſenſes, as well as the perſon of enlightened intellect (D)*. With theſe impreſſions the ideas of *time* and *place* are powerfully aſſociated. The horſe never fails to remem-

* See Note at the end of the volume.

ber

ber the ſpot, where he beheld the object which ſtartled him: nor does the little turnſpit-dog forget the hour which calls him to duty: yet neither the dog nor horſe have clear conceptions of the objects which they thus appear ſo perfectly to recollect.

With all the attention paid to the cultivation of memory in modern education, I am afraid that, upon ſtrict examination, we ſhould ſometimes find, that it is the memory of perception alone which our endeavours tend to improve. Uſeful, without doubt, this branch of memory is; and as it comes to maturity with the firſt of the faculties which the human mind diſplays, it may be effectually employed, before the conceptions are ſufficiently vigorous to give exerciſe to the other. But let us not expect more from the memory of perception than it is calculated to produce. Let us not continue to beſtow our ſole attention upon its cultivation, after the period

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that the higher branch of memory has power to operate. As it may be of importance to point out the conſequences of this error, I ſhall beg your attention to the following remarks.

That words are a medium by which ideas or conceptions are communicated to the mind, muſt be admitted on all hands. Every word is certainly either ſignificant of ſome idea in itſelf, as are nouns and adjectives; or ſerves to connect ideas, as we ſee done by prepoſitions and participles. But we all know the ſound of a word to be one thing, and its meaning to be another. With very little trouble, a perſon of clear perceptions may learn the Greek alphabet, and acquire the proper pronunciation of Greek words; but if he knows not the ideas of which theſe words are the ſigns, I cannot ſee that he is one whit the wiſer.

I may read one of Sir Iſaac Newton's profoundeſt problems as well and as diſtinctly as the mathematical profeſſor at either

either Univerſity; but while deſtitute of all correſponding ideas, while without a link whereon to faſten the chain of reaſoning, I can neither form, nor retain, an idea upon the ſubject. Do I ſtrive to recollect the ſubject, I find nothing but a confuſed heap of ideas, which are the faint images of the appropriate meaning of the words, as I have heretofore been accuſtomed to apply them; but nothing wherewith to aſſociate them, ſo as to make ſenſe upon the ſubject. I may, nevertheleſs, commit the problem to memory, for memory will retain the ideas of perception; and I may either do this by means of attentively looking at the words, or by repeating them aloud, till the perception is ſufficiently ſtrong to become an object of memory. In either caſe, I ſhall be equally aſſiſted in my taſk by the arrangement of the words; as the way in which the words ſtand with regard to each other, aſſociates the idea of each word with that which follows it, whether

ther this aſſociation be made by means of the eye or the ear. Well, after all this trouble, how much do I know of Newton's problem? Have I one more idea upon the ſubject of mathematics, than I had before I began to learn it? Surely, no. Go, then, and aſk your little boys and girls, when they come from ſchool, what ideas they have upon geography, hiſtory, arithmetic, &c. for exactly in the ſame way as I have here deſcribed, are theſe ſciences taught to children, while their powers of conception are not yet ſufficiently opened to receive ideas upon ſubjects far leſs abſtruſe.*

* The following Anecdote I had from a Gentleman, of blunt manners, but great goodneſs of heart, though being himſelf a bachelor, he could not, perhaps, enter into the maternal feelings, as many of my readers will do. Being once on a viſit to a fond mother, he found her entirely occupied by the extraordinary attainments of her little girl, whom ſhe repreſented as a prodigy of genius. "Be ſo good, now, my dear ſir, as to aſk her any queſtion in geography, or any queſtion that you pleaſe, and you will find how well ſhe will anſwer it. Come,

Let us now proceed with my illuſtration, and ſuppoſe, that after having got the problem by heart, ſuch a length of time ſhould have elapſed, as effaced all remembrance of the words and their relative poſition. Once loſt, the memory of them muſt be loſt for ever. For there is this difference betwixt the forgetfulneſs of a thing that has once been diſtinctly conceived, and the forgetfulneſs of what we have merely learned by eye or ear, that though the former may not be ready at our call, it is nevertheleſs in the mind, (though in a dormant ſtate) and will be found to be ſo on accurate reſearch; while the latter is not

Come, love, this good gentleman is going to aſk you a queſtion." The child advanced, and the gentleman not willing to embarraſs her by any thing difficult, and wiſhing to get quit of his new office of taſk-maſter as ſoon as poſſible, after a little heſitation aſked her, "Where was Turkey?" 'Out in the back yard with the young poults,' replied the child with great ſimplicity. "The very beſt anſwer," returns the gentleman embracing her, "that any child of five years old in the world could give to the queſtion."

only

only faded, but totally obliterated. Hence it would never be in my power, to the end of my days, to recal the problem I had ſo learned. But let us ſuppoſe, (and I ſincerely wiſh the ſuppoſition could be realized) that I had regularly learned the elements of mathematics, and been enabled to go on, ſtep by ſtep, from problem to problem, having all along the moſt accurate and clear conceptions of the whole. The new ideas which I ſhould in that caſe have received from the problem in queſtion, would then have been but an addition to the foregoing chain, and would have added no leſs to its ſolidity than extenſion. The terms in which theſe ideas were communicated, might fade from my remembrance; but the ideas themſelves would remain engraven on the tablet of memory for ever.

Ideas which the mind has thus received, arrange themſelves in order (figuratively ſpeaking) with ideas of the ſame claſs: with theſe

theſe they become aſſociated, and it is by means of this aſſociation that they are recalled at pleaſure. Frequently, indeed, may they be recalled, when the ſource from which they were derived is loſt to our remembrance.

People who are not aware of theſe laws of arrangement and aſſociation, are frequently diſheartened, on finding how little of that which they have even read with the utmoſt attention, is accurately retained by the memory. But let not ſuch people be diſcouraged: ſince they may certainly be aſſured, that if their conceptions of the ſubject have been clear and diſtinct, and that they have given them that degree of attention which is eſſential to memory, the ideas they have received, will never be totally loſt. They will be mingled with other ideas, and with them be recalled, as occaſion offers.

While the faculty of conception remains uncultivated, the memory even of the ob-

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jects of perception muſt be in many inſtances defective.

The obvious aſſiſtance which the memory receives from the aſſociation of ideas, has induced ſome philoſophers to explain the phenomena of memory entirely upon that principle.* Be that as it may, we are all ſenſible of its preſent operation; and we muſt likewiſe be ſenſible, that the greater the number of our ideas, the more materials will the laws of aſſociation have to operate upon in our minds. Theſe ideas are like ſo many pegs,† on which to hang the new ideas we receive. Where the pegs are weak, or few in number, little will be hung up, all will fall down into the

* See Hartley.

† As Plato had his cave in the mind, and Mr. Locke his dark room, I don't ſee why I may not drive up a few pegs in it. Placed by my feeble hand, they can do no injury. Whereas, had an ancient philoſopher made uſe of ſuch a figure, the world might have gone by the ears, about their length and dimenſions.——*See Berkeley and Hume upon Ideas.*

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abyſs of forgetfulneſs. Now thoſe whoſe memory is chiefly employed on objects of perception, are exactly in this predicament; there are no pegs in the minds of ſuch, whereon to hang their new ideas, but two, viz. time and place: theſe are the only aſſociations which aſſiſt the memory of the vulgar. Events which produce in enlightened minds a ſeries of uſeful reflections, ſerve with them no other purpoſe but to recal ſome former period, when ſomething ſimilar occurred.

"Yes," ſays the ſteward, "I remember when I
"was at my Lady Shrewſbury's,
"Such a thing as this happened, *juſt about the time*
"*of gooſeberries.*"*

Shakeſpeare gives many admirable inſtances of this ſpecies of aſſociation in vulgar characters, and to theſe I refer the reader.

If the remarks which I have ventured to make, are admitted to be founded in truth, it evidently follows, that the cultivation of

* Swift.

that

that branch of memory which belongs to perception, will have no influence in expanding the powers of the mind. That it is only by cultivating and improving the faculty of conception that this can be accomplished: and that while this is unattended to, the whole Encyclopædia may be got by heart, without giving any more ideas to the pupil, than if he had been all the time employed in repeating the letters of the alphabet.

Is, then, the cultivation of the memory of perception, a matter of no importance? Ought memory never to be exercised, but upon subjects which children can fully comprehend? To these queries I shall take a future opportunity of giving a satisfactory answer: and shall leave you for the present to reflect upon what has been already advanced. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

CONCEPTION.

Lively Tempers particularly liable to Inaccuracy.—How this Fault is to be obviated.—The proper Exercise of Memory in early Life considered.—Illustrations.

BEFORE I proceed to make any further obſervations upon the ſubject of memory, I ſhall take notice of the third cauſe aſſigned by Mr. Locke for that imperfect diſcernment, (or conception) which renders the mind incapable of diſcriminating ideas one from another; namely, *the haſtineſs and precipitancy natural to ſome tempers.*

I have formerly had occaſion to obſerve, that the rapid courſe of ideas in the minds of the lively and vivacious is inimical to attention; and that without attention there can be no accurate perception, no memory, and conſequently no diſcernment. It is, therefore, to diſpoſitions of this caſt, of the utmoſt importance, to acquire the habit of commanding attention in early life. In proportion to the vivacity of the diſpoſition will be the difficulty of acquiring this habit; and in proportion to the difficulty is the neceſſity of making the attainment.

This ſubject will riſe into importance, when we conſider, that it is entirely owing to a want of proper attention to it during the early part of life, that genius is ſo often rendered not only an uſeleſs, but a baneful gift. Minds which eagerly catch at new ideas, without accuracy, without diſcrimination, will be for ever liable to miſconception: they will be ardent in error; and, alike precipitate in conduct as in judgment, they

they will act, as they assert, with rashness and presumption. They may acquire knowledge, but wisdom will not be the result of the acquirement. They may be brilliant, but they will never be useful.

The first misfortune to which children who have this natural quickness of parts are commonly exposed, is vanity: and no sooner is vanity engendered, than a fresh stimulus is given to that rapid succession of ideas, which is for ever at war with sober and fixed attention. Vanity is, in minds of this cast, easily called forth: it is congenial to the disposition, and requires but the transient breath of praise to blow it into a flame. Let us beware, then, lest in the warmth of our admiration at the quickness of the capacity, we render it incapable of strength and vigour. The eye that can discern objects clearly and accurately, is of much more value than that which takes in a number at a rapid glance, without any distinct discernment of their various

rious diſtances and proportions. While the former power remained defective, it would be of little conſequence that the latter was, by the uſe of ſtimulants, ſo far increaſed, as to enable the eye to ſee at once a ſtill greater number of indiſtinct and imperfect images. To give perfection to the ſenſe of ſight, we muſt be able to perceive objects clearly and diſtinctly, as well as quickly. And juſt ſo it is with the mind; which, if deſtitute of the capability of diſcrimination, will reap no advantage from the number of imperfect ideas with which it is ſtored.

Inſtead of ſtimulating theſe quick and forward diſpoſitions to the acquirement of new ideas, we ought to beſtow the utmoſt pains in checking the rapidity of their thoughts; and in diſcouraging the haſtineſs of their concluſions. While the ſlow ought to be led with gentleneſs, theſe ought to be made keenly ſenſible of every error; eſpecially when theſe errors have their ſource in the raſhneſs of confidence,

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and the preſumption of ſelf-conceit. They ought to be made to ſee and to feel the advantages of attention, and every opportunity ſhould be ſeized for bringing the diſadvantages ariſing from a want of attention home to their feelings. A ſeemingly quick apprehenſion of what they learn, ought never to be accepted. They muſt be made to view every ſubject in every light of which it is capable, and to examine it in all its parts, ſo as to acquire not only lively, but diſtinct and true notions concerning it.

Habits of accuracy and arrangement are of ſuch importance to theſe volatile ſpirits, that they ought to be carried into every part of their buſineſs; and on no pretext to be diſpenſed with. Their employments, their amuſements, their hours of meals, of dreſſing, and of relaxation, in ſhort, the whole of their time, ought to be under the ſtrict invariable rule of diſcipline. There is an eccentricity attending

tending theſe characters, which, without conſtant attention, will be perpetually flying off into ſome extravagance: and if this be much indulged, we may bid a long adieu to all improvement.

Attention and arrangement are what theſe minds peculiarly ſtand in need of; and every thing that can contribute to the acquirement of theſe neceſſary habits is to them of the utmoſt conſequence. We may be certain, that the deſultory will come to perfection in nothing. Every rule with regard to the employment of time which is ſtrictly adhered to, is one ſtep towards acquiring theſe habits of arrangement in our ideas, of which I have already explained the neceſſity and uſe. It is here, and only here, that ſchools have, in general, an advantage over private tuition, eſpecially with regard to females. The mother who, for want of proper arrangement of her own plans, permits the houſhold economy and the reception of viſitors to

be

for ever interrupting the courſe of her inſtructions, need not expect that much benefit from them will ever reſult to her children. It is of little conſequence how theſe chaſms are filled up: by the indolent they will probably be ſpent in ſauntering idleneſs, and in frolickſome miſchief by the vivacious; but they will prove alike injurious to both.

The cultivation of every faculty is attended with a conſiderable degree of effort; and effort does not ceaſe to be painful until it is relieved by habit. Where the effort is ſubject to irregular interruptions, it will continue to be for ever painful, and will conſequently be avoided as much as poſſible. It ought to be the peculiar care of the preceptor to render theſe efforts eaſy by confirming them into habits; which cannot be done but by perſeverance.

Every difficulty will be ſmoothed by the habit of attention; but the habit of attention muſt be the effect of many painful

ful efforts in the quick and lively, as well as in the ſlow and dull. Very different, however, are the means to be uſed, in exciting theſe oppoſite characters to the effort of attention. In the languid, we muſt awaken the dormant ſpirit of curioſity; we muſt endeavour to animate the ſpirits, to enliven the vivacity, and to encreaſe the flow of ideas, by all that is cheerful and exhilarating. When the mind is in this train, the attention may, with eaſe, be turned to the examination of objects from which new and uſeful ideas are to be received. But let not the attention be worn out. Let it not, in ſuch ſubjects, be ever ſtretched to the point of wearineſs; or the mind will again ſink into torpidity.

To fix the attention of the volatile and precipitate, a very different courſe muſt be purſued. We muſt begin at a very early period to demand accuracy in the examination of objects. We muſt bring the ſpirits under the ſubjection of authority,

by

enforcing a ready and implicit obedience. Inſtead of ſeeking, as in the other caſe, to exhilarate the ſpirits, by preſenting a variety of cheerful images to the mind; we muſt uſe our utmoſt endeavour to allay their effervescence, without injuring the temper, or repreſſing cheerfulneſs and vivacity. We muſt accuſtom them, as ſoon as poſſible, to a moderate degree of reſtraint; and, above all other things, we muſt endeavour to ſubdue the pride that is congenial to ſuch tempers, and in its place to plant the grace of genuine humility. If we ſucceed in this, we ſhall have rendered the effort of attention not only poſſible, but eaſy; and then it will be our buſineſs to direct it to the acquirement of juſt, clear, and accurate conceptions.

The faculty of conception in theſe two oppoſite characters, and the different methods to be obſerved in improving it, may be compared to the proceſs of cryſtallization in ſome chemical experiments. In theſe

it

it ſometimes happens, that in one inſtance the ſolution muſt be ſtirred and agitated before a ſingle cryſtal will appear; while in mixtures of an oppoſite nature, the fermentation muſt be made to ſubſide, and all muſt be rendered calm and ſtill, or the particles will never coaleſce.

The very oppoſite methods that are here deſcribed as abſolutely neceſſary towards remedying the oppoſite cauſes of imperfection in the faculty of conception, can evidently never be attempted but in domeſtic education. Wherever numbers are to be educated together, one rule, one ſyſtem, muſt ſerve for all. There the half-formed conceptions of the quick, and the non-conceptions of the ſlow, paſs equally current. The ſame taſk is got by both: the ſame routine of leſſons, the ſame exerciſes of memory upon words without ideas, falls to the lot of all. The conſequence is, that the haſty and precipitate, become prejudiced and ſuperficial, and that the ſlow and languid remain indolent and ignorant.

To children of keen and lively perceptions, it is of the greateſt conſequence that the preceptor ſhould be quick and penetrating: and to all who are engaged in the education of youth, it is abſolutely eſſential, that they ſhould be able inſtantly to diſcern the degree and accuracy of the conception formed in the mind of the child, on whatever ſubject it may be engaged.

Indolence and partiality are inſuperable obſtacles to this diſcernment. Theſe will always accept of a "yes," or "I under-"ſtand it," from the pupil, as ſufficient proofs of clear and accurate conception; while to a leſs partial or more diſcerning ſpectator, the countenance will betray the abſence or the vacancy of the mind within.

A good Lady I once knew, who devoted much of her time to the inſtruction of the ignorant. It happened, that I was by one morning when one of little *protegées* was reading to her in the Bible. The ſubject was the taking of Jericho. At

every

every time that Joſhua marched round the walls, a pauſe was made, and a lecture given by the good lady on the wonder-working power of Providence; of which I evidently ſaw her little auditor underſtood not one word. At length the trumpets ſounded, and "now, Betty, now you will "ſee how the walls of this wicked place "will fall at the prophet's voice!"

I here begged leave to ſpeak, "Pray, "Betty, what was Jericho? was it a man, "or a woman, or a place, or what?"

'I believe it was a woman, Ma'am," returned Betty, with great *ſang-froid.*

I make no doubt that inſtances may at this moment occur to your recollection, when, upon ſuch *mal-apropos* examinations, anſwers would have been returned, as little ſatisfactory to the preceptreſs as that I have above related. Nay, it is more than probable, that if you have ever chanced to be preſent when a book beyond a common novel has been read aloud

to

to a company of ladies; or above all, if you have ever attended a philoſophical lecture; you may poſſibly have had occaſion to remark the formation of conceptions no leſs erroneous and incongruous.

This moſt eſſential difference may ever be obſerved betwixt thoſe who have early been accuſtomed to clear and diſtinct ideas, and thoſe who have been in the habit of receiving inaccurate and ſuperficial ones: that on a ſubject equally new to both, the former will examine and enquire, and be thoroughly informed, before they profeſs belief; whereas the latter catches at the firſt idea, right or wrong, and confidently aſſerts belief, before there has been time or proof to afford conviction.

It is in early life only, that this raſhneſs will admit of cure. In early life, therefore, its cure ought to be aſſiduouſly endeavoured; and few more effectual remedies will be found than frequent mortification. This mortification is ſo ſevere a

puniſhment

puniſhment to an ardent mind, that to avoid it, it will willingly ſubmit to the painful effort of attention. Mortification muſt, however, be adminiſtered with a cautious and judicious hand; elſe it will harden the mind, inſtead of humbling it. It muſt be made to reſult from a ſenſe of its own precipitancy, and led to perceive, of its own accord, where that precipitancy plunged it into error; and by tracing back its ſteps, it will loſe much of that ſelf-confidence, which is the great bane of youth in modern times.

That much of the ſelf-ſufficiency and arrogance, which is ſo often, and alas! ſo juſtly, complained of by the obſerving moraliſts of our age, may be traced to the ſource of a ſuperficial education, I, for my ſhare, have no doubt. By learning a little of many things, without acquiring juſt and accurate ideas upon any, they in fact learn nothing but conceit and preſumption. Having never been made to feel the neceſſity of acquiring clear and diſtinct conceptions upon

upon whatever ſubject engaged their attention, they are unconſcious of their deficiency. They conceive not the confuſion that reigns in their minds; but conſcious of having ſome ideas upon ſubjects with which thoſe they eſteem the vulgar and the ignorant are altogether unacquainted, they piqne themſelf upon this fancied ſuperiority, and imagine, poor things! that they know all things; when, in fact, they know nothing.

When a mind of quickneſs and vivacity has been thus accuſtomed to the reception of half-formed images, it will never ſubmit to the control of judgment, nor cultivate the faculty of reflection. Theſe higher powers of the mind will lie for ever dormant; and the ſole guidance of conduct will be ſubmitted to the impulſe of feeling. The conſequences of this I need not pourtray; they are, alas! too glaring, and occur too frequently, to ſtand in need of animadverſion.

If theſe

If theſe things are true, it will appear to us evident, that to cultivate the faculty of conception, ſo as that all the ideas are clear, diſtinct, and accurate, is a matter of the firſt importance; and that the conſequences reſulting from a due attention to this material point, will be infinitely more beneficial to our pupils, than any they could reap from multiplying the objects of ſtudy at an early age. A child ſhould, in fact, have no more to learn than it can learn well. All rules for beginning this or that branch of ſcience are nugatory and abſurd. The object which ought to be for ever in the parent's eye, and to which all endeavours ought to be directed, is the perfecting all the powers of the mind in ſuch a manner, as that when the period of maturity arrives, they may all be employed in promoting the happineſs (the temporal and eternal happineſs) of the individual and of ſociety. The education that tends not to this end, is worſe than labour loſt. It perverts

perverts the intentions of Providence, by preventing the expanſion of the intellectual faculties; it buries the moſt precious gifts of Heaven; and, by ſowing the ſeeds of pride and preſumption, it ſcatters vice and folly throughout the world!

I may be thought very bold in attempting to overturn the eſtabliſhed laws of faſhion; thoſe laws by which the generality of parents are guided in the ſyſtem of education. But however ſubmiſſive to her decrees in ſubjects of taſte, I have been early taught, that neither reaſon nor conſcience ought to yield to her authority.

In my oppoſition in the preſent inſtance I happily do not ſtand alone; I am bleſt in a coadjutor who has wielded againſt the ſyſtem of modern education the bright weapons of wit and eloquence, enforced by the ſtrong arm of truth and reaſon.* All I can advance upon the ſubject, will prove

* See Mrs. More's Strictures on Female Education.

an illuſtration of the juſtice of her obſervations; which may, in their turn, ſerve as a comment upon mine. She pourtrays the conſequences, I trace the cauſe, of the evils of which we mutually complain. The giddineſs, the frivolity, and the ſuperficialneſs, which ſhe ſo well deſcribes, would never have been engendered in the youthful mind but by an education, which, inſtead of endeavouring gradually and effectually to develope the faculties, according to the order deſcribed by nature, has ſet nature and common-ſenſe at defiance; and, regardleſs of their laws, has vainly aimed at giving an artificial maturity, a ſeeming fecundity in ideas, where, in reality, all is waſte and barren.

When little miſs, or little maſter, come home from ſchool, we are ſtunned by the recital of their accompliſhments. They are all ſkilled in languages, and expert in ſcience; all equally favoured by the Muſes and the Graces. Nothing can equal the delight which a benevolent mind experiences

riences in the contemplation of ſuch perfection! "How rapidly," it is inclined to think, "muſt knowledge and virtue "be diffuſed throughout the world, when "theſe tender bloſſoms of wiſdom ſhall "have ripened to maturity! See the bleſt "effects of ſtrewing the path of learn-"ing with flowers! What formerly coſt "years of attention and perſeverance, is "now accompliſhed in leſs than as many "months. Surely, ſurely, we have very "much improved upon the method of our "forefathers; and of theſe improvements "the next generation will taſte the happy "fruits."

Yes, my Friend, we have improved upon the wiſdom of our anceſtors, pretty much in the ſame manner, as he who ſhould exchange an oak wood for a grove of Lombardy poplars; and if we lay aſide all idea of durability, ſtrength, and utility, the young poplar will, I acknowledge, claim the preference. But when we come to apply

apply the one and the other to uſeful purpoſes, we ſhall have no reaſon to think ourſelves gainers by the exchange.

Every thing in nature teaches us, that whatever is intended for ſtrength and duration advances by ſlow degrees to maturity. The human mind, in this reſpect, obeys the ſame laws as the material world; and as nature, though ſlow, is ever operative and vigilant, we ſurely ought, when we attempt to act the part of her aſſiſtants, to follow her plan, and be guided by her example. Each faculty of the human mind ſhe opens one after another, and intruſts to our foſtering care. Theſe, as ſhe ſucceſſively preſents them, we ought vigilantly to improve. The Perceptive Powers come firſt, then Attention, Memory, and Conception: with theſe are joined as much of the faculty of Judgment as is neceſſary to bring theſe other faculties to ſome degree of perfection, and no more. When they are perfect, Judgment and Imagination

tion diſplay themſelves, and lead to Abſtraction and Reflection, which cloſe the intellectual catalogue.

In our vain attempts to overturn the order of nature, by preſenting objects and purſuits to the mind, which demand the exertion of faculties of which it is not yet in poſſeſſion, we are guilty of a double ſpecies of impoſition. We impoſe upon our pupils, by making them conceive that they get ideas of things, on which they have, in reality, no ideas; and we impoſe upon ourſelves by their ſeeming progreſs—an impoſition which is greatly aided by the facility with which the ſound of words is committed to memory in early life. Thus, without paying any attention to the cultivation of the firſt and fundamental faculties, we flatter ourſelves that we have abridged the path to wiſdom and knowledge; while, in reality, we have been leading them from it, in the direct road to conceit and ignorance.

When

When we conſider that the exerciſe of attention is abſolutely neceſſary towards diſtinct perception and accurate diſcernment; and reflect how difficult it is to rouſe attention in the ſlow, and to check the rapid ſucceſſion of ideas in the quick, ſo as to give attention leave to operate; we ſhall perceive, that a multiplicity of things to be learned at once, muſt inevitably tend to retard the progreſs of the faculties. Thoſe who have experienced how difficult it is to give juſt, and clear, and diſtinct notions to a child, upon any ſubject which is not the immediate object of its external ſenſes, muſt be ſenſible of the utter impoſſibility of its learning many things well at the ſame time. Where the attention is turned from object to object, the conſequence will be, that it will fix on none; not, at leaſt, for ſuch a length of time as to acquire clear and diſtinct conceptions. It is the perceptions only that will in this caſe be exerciſed; the words will be ſeen, they will be heard

heard, and they will be repeated. Theſe perceptions will be committed to memory; but in all this proceſs there is neither knowledge, judgment, nor diſcernment; and the more compleatly the time is filled by ſuch employment, the more will the developement of theſe faculties be retarded.

This leads to the queries with which my laſt letter concluded. Is it proper to reſtrict the exerciſe of memory in childhood to ſubjects whereon it has acquired juſt and accurate notions? Is it never to be exerciſed upon words, of whoſe meaning it has no diſtinct ideas? I ſhould be ſorry to be ſo underſtood. I think the memory may be exerciſed with great advantage in childhood, upon words which can, at that period, convey no diſtinct ideas to the mind; but theſe are words which are afterwards to be made uſe of; they are the tools with which the mind is, at a future period, to work. Such are the rules of grammar; the terms made uſe of in the

the ſciences, which are to form a part of the future ſtudies; and, in ſhort, all thoſe general claſſifications, which tie, as it were, the objects of knowledge into ſeparate parcels, and thus abridge the labour of reſearch and arrangement.

Every one, who at an advanced period of life has attempted to inſtruct himſelf in any branch of ſcience, muſt be ſenſible how much the difficulty is increaſed, by the loſs of the aptitude, which memory has in early life, for retaining mere perceptions. What is clearly conceived upon the ſubject, the memory faithfully retains; but it is not without great and repeated efforts that the neceſſary *terms* come to be familiarly recollected. I have known ſeveral perſons, who have been by this difficulty deterred from the purſuit of botany, chemiſtry, and other ſciences, for the acquirement of which they felt the moſt ardent inclination. Had the technical terms belonging to thoſe ſciences been committed to memory, at that period

period of life when words (that is to ſay perceptions) are received with facility, and recollected with eaſe, the ſciences I have mentioned would have been attained without the ſmalleſt difficulty.

The grammatical rules of every language come exactly under the ſame deſcription. Perſons to whom theſe rules have been familiar from the period of infancy, eaſily acquire the habit of arranging their words with propriety: while thoſe who have not at an early period made this acquirement, though by the ſtudy of philoſophical grammar, they may attain a perfect knowledge of its principles, yet will they in practice be frequently at a loſs, and often liable to error. I candidly confeſs, that I ſpeak this from my own experience; and am ſenſible that a more perfect acquaintance with the rules of grammar, acquired even by rote in early life, would have ſaved me many a painful hour of future ſtudy.

Here, then, have I preſented you with a wide field for the exerciſe of the memory

of perceptions. But deceive not yourſelf; deceive not your child into an opinion that it has obtained any *knowledge* from theſe exerciſes. Let them be looked upon as they really are—mere materials, which are to be made uſe of at the proper period. Of real uſe they will certainly be found; they will be as well-tempered mortar in the conſtruction of the ſolid edifice. But you muſt not ſo far miſtake, as to conſider this mortar as the building; if you do, the intellectual fabric will never be reared.

It is, I believe, a very generally received notion, that a taſte for poetry is inſpired by the recitation of verſes. Let us examine in what this taſte conſiſts.

Poetry addreſſes itſelf particularly to the imagination and to the feelings. "In po-"etry," ſays Doctor Stewart, "the effect is "inconſiderable, *unleſs upon a mind which* "*poſſeſſes ſome degree of the author's genius;* "*a mind amply furniſhed, by its previous* "*habits, with the means of interpreting the*

language

"*language which he employs; and able, by "its own imagination, to co-operate with the "effects of the art.*" And is it by a ſenſeleſs repetition of the poet's words, that all theſe indiſpenſable requiſites are to be acquired? I grant, that by the repetition of ſmooth verſes, the ear may become ſenſible of harmonious meaſure; and this, I believe, often enough paſſes for poetical taſte. But where the mind is incapable of keeping pace with the rapid aſſociations of the poet; where the fineſt alluſions are loſt for want ofconceptions to apprehend their meaning; where the fineſt imagery preſents no object to the mind; the emotions that are excited have ſurely no affinity to the ſublime or beautiful. Even in deſcriptive poetry, unleſs the objects have been familiar to the perceptions, it is impoſſible that the moſt juſt and beautiful deſcription can convey any ideas to the mind.

Let us ſuppoſe a little girl, whoſe acquaintance with natural objects extends to the

the graſs-plat which ornaments the centre of ſome neighbouring ſquare. In order to cultivate a taſte for deſcriptive poetry, ſhe is enjoined the taſk of getting by heart Gray's celebrated elegy, which abounds in imagery at once natural and affecting. Let us follow her in the conceptions ſhe forms from it. Two lines will be a ſufficient example:

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
"The lowing herd wind ſlowly o'er the lea."

The curfew, it is more than probable, ſhe has never heard of. Perhaps in ſome of the "Beauties of Hiſtory," which ſhe has read as leſſons, the curfew may have been mentioned; but *it is poſſible* that it may never have been explained; of the tolling of a bell ſhe has perhaps heard, but of the meaning of *knell* ſhe is compleatly ignorant. With the term *parting day* ſhe, it is likely, aſſociates the idea of the black Monday, on which ſhe parted with her friends to return to ſchool; an aſſociation

ſufficiently

ſufficiently melancholy to accord with the tone of the poem, but not very likely to facilitate her knowledge of its deſign. What does ſhe make, what *can* ſhe make, of the ſucceeding line? A *herd* ſhe has probably heard of, as one who takes care of ſheep, goats, or other animals; but why the herd ſhould *low*, is certainly beyond her comprehenſion. How, or in what manner, he *winds*, is equally ſo. She is told, indeed, that he winds ſlowly, and ſhe knows that one may wind a clock or a watch either ſlowly or quickly; and with that idea ſhe probably aſſociates it, paſſing the ſucceeding words of *o'er the lea* as mere expletives, placed there by the poet to lengthen out the line; for which purpoſe *tweedle dee* would, to her conception, have done every whit as well.

I could thus go through the whole poem, and think I ſhould leave no doubt upon your mind at the concluſion, that the child had received as many ideas from this exer-

ciſe

ciſe of memory, as ſhe would have done from the repetition of any old ryme.

Where the perceptive powers have been ſufficiently exerciſed upon natural objects, ſo as to render the greater part of a poetical deſcription intelligible, great advantage may indeed ariſe from the peruſal; becauſe, in that caſe, the pleaſure which the mind receives from ſeeing the images with which it has been familiar, ſet in a new, and more elegant, and elevated point of view, will ſerve to enliven the powers of curioſity and obſervation, and prove a ſtimulus to the acquirement of new ideas.

I well remember how eagerly I caught the information, that bells were worn by the leaders of the flock, in moſt parts of England. The cuſtom was unknown in the part of the country where I paſſed my childhood, and conſequently the firſt lines of a poetical deſcription which I ardently admired, were to me unintelligible.* The

remaining

remaining lines preſented objects with which I had long been familiar. The ſimple ſuperſtitions of the peaſantry were known to me; I had frequently heard their origin explained, and their folly pointed out; but the colours thrown over them by the charm of poetry, preſented them to my view in a new and intereſting light.

And now, my dear Friend, let me refer it to your judgment, (ſetting all adherence to cuſtom, to theory, and to prejudice, entirely aſide) whether a reliſh for the beauties of poetical deſcription will not be much

* *The following are the Lines alluded to:*

" When Blouſelind expir'd, the wether's bell
" Before the drooping flock pour'd forth her knell;
" The ſolemn death-watch click'd the hour ſhe dy'd,
" And ſhrilling crickets in the chimney cry'd;
" The boding raven on her cottage ſat,
" And with hoarſe croaking, warn'd us of her fate;
" The lambkin, which her wonted prudence bred,
" Dropp'd on the plains that fatal inſtant dead;
" Swarm'd on a rotten ſtick, the bees I ſpy'd,
" Which erſt I ſaw when Goody Dobſon dy'd."

more

more likely to reſult from a lively attention to all the images which are employed by the poet, as they become objects of perception, than by the repetition of words without ideas? A familiar and intimate acquaintance with the objects of nature will not, it is true, be always ſufficient to inſpire poetical taſte; but without an intimate acquaintance with natural objects, the conceptions of the poet can never be underſtood; for it is from the material world that all the fineſt imagery of the poet is derived. From the ſame ſource we have all our ideas of the ſublime and beautiful. The deſcriptions of the poet, by calling our attention to theſe objects, increaſes the emotions which they have a natural tendency to excite; and and thus a taſte for poetry enhances the pleaſure we derive from contemplating the beauties of nature, while an accurate knowledge of natural objects gives to poetry a peculiar zeſt.

It is, then, from a cultivation of the perceptive faculties, that we only can attain thoſe powers of conception which are eſſential to taſte; and without this cultivation, all the beauties of all the poets who have ever written, committed to memory, would do no more towards inſpiring poetical taſte, than the ſmell of a roſe would do towards giving an idea of its colour to one who had been born blind.

From the tenor of theſe obſervations on the cultivation of the perceptive and conceptive faculties, the advantages of a country education in the early part of life will appear ſufficiently evident. Thoſe who have it not in their power to give this advantage to their children; thoſe whoſe ſituation precludes their pupils from the benefit of an extenſive and familiar acquaintance with natural objects, ought to be particularly ſolicitous to make them amends for this misfortune, by ſeizing every op-

portunity of directing their attention to the natural objects within their reach. If the vegetable world is shut to their perusal, the book of animated nature is open before them. If "the various "landscape bursts *not* on the sight," the sun, moon, and stars, may still be seen. Nor ought an attentive examination of the works of art to be neglected. In most of these, some principles of science are involved. From the most simple piece of mechanism ideas may be derived; and no source that can furnish the mind with ideas which are just and accurate, ought we to overlook.

I have incurred the risk of wearying you upon the subject of accurate conception, because I believe that it is but little attended to by the instructors of youth; and I would rather tax your patience by prolixity, than leave any thing unsaid which could tend to enforce the belief of its importance. That importance will still appear

pear in a ſtronger point of view, when we come to conſider the faculty of judgment, which ſhall be the ſubject of the next Letter.

Adieu.

LETTER VII.

JUDGMENT

First begins to operate upon the Objects of Perception.--Necessity of exercising it upon sensible Objects.--Illustrations.--How it may at first be exercised on Moral Propositions.—Party Prejudice inimical to its Cultivation.—Observations on this Head.—The Use of History.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AS all the errors, and many of the vices, of mankind originate in a deficiency or perverſion of the faculty of Judgment, we are called upon for a very particular attention to its cultivation and improvement. By tracing the progreſs of its gradual developement in the human mind, we ſhall perhaps be enabled to exert our own judgment to advantage, in determining on the

the ſteps moſt proper to be taken for the cultivation of this important faculty; while by obſerving the obſtacles frequently oppoſed to its improvement, we ſhall perceive the reaſon of its ſeldom attaining maturity.

It evidently appears, that judgment begins firſt to operate on the perceptive faculties; and that till the commencement of this operation, the mind is incapable of improvement from the objects of ſenſe. The knowledge that is obtained of the relative diſtances of viſible objects, is an operation of judgment: even in the belief of the exiſtence of ſuch objects, judgment is concerned. And this conſideration ought to make us particularly careful of miſleading the tender minds of infants into erroneous judgments, concerning the powers and properties of the objects with which they are moſt converſant.

"If you touch that ſtick, it will be angry, "and beat you," ſays the fooliſh nurſe. 'The ſtick is taller than you are,' ſays the

the more ſenſible mother, 'and if you 'bring it upon you, it will hurt you.'

It is by means of judgment, that a child is gradually made ſenſible that the preſence of objects does not depend upon his perception of them. To the infant the object is no longer preſent than it is viſible to his eyes. The powers of conception and judgment muſt both have exerted their influence, before he believes the contrary: and by what ſlow degrees their influence is exerted, is obvious; as we ſee children of two or three years of age, who, when they cover their eyes, imagine they are ſecurely ſcreened from obſervation.

If we attempt to force the progreſs of judgment at a very early age, we ſhall only weaken its powers; if we are always ready in every little inſtance to interpoſe our own, ſo as to foreſtall the judgments of the child, we ſhall teach it to reſt upon au- and the faculty of judgment, will be little exerted through life.

It

It ought, therefore, to be our business to lead and to aſſiſt the judgment, ſo as to render it ſtrong and vigorous, rather than to impoſe upon it the dictates of authority. By pointing out to children the erroneous judgments which they form upon the trifles within their ſphere, we ſhall not only improve their powers of judging, but make them ſenſible of the advantage of implicit obedience to thoſe who are capable of in much more diſcernment.

A child conſiders its painted toy as a *whole;* it has no notion of its parts, properties, or attributes. It is told that by wetting it, it will be deſtroyed. Unmindful of your warning, it drags it through water; the paint comes off, the glue diſſolves, and the whole fabric is demoliſhed.

"Did not I tell you, you little miſchie-
"vous monkey, that it would be deſtroyed!
"The little coach knew that you were
"naughty in diſobeying me, and it went
"to pieces."

Charming

the more ſenſible mother, 'and if you 'bring it upon you, it will hurt you.'

It is by means of judgment, that a child is gradually made ſenſible that the preſence of objects does not depend upon his perception of them. To the infant the object is no longer preſent than it is viſible to his eyes. The powers of conception and judgment muſt both have exerted their influence, before he believes the contrary: and by what ſlow degrees their influence is exerted, is obvious; as we ſee children of two or three years of age, who, when they cover their eyes, imagine they are ſecurely ſcreened from obſervation.

If we attempt to force the progreſs of judgment at a very early age, we ſhall only weaken its powers; if we are always ready in every little inſtance to interpoſe our own, ſo as to foreſtall the judgments of the child, we ſhall teach it to reſt upon authority, and the faculty of judgment, will probably be little exerted through life.

It

It ought, therefore, to be our buſineſs to lead and to aſſiſt the judgment, ſo as to render it ſtrong and vigorous, rather than to impoſe upon it the dictates of authority. By pointing out to children the erroneous judgments which they form upon the trifles within their ſphere, we ſhall not only improve their powers of judging, but make them ſenſible of the advantage of implicit obedience to thoſe who are capable of ſo much more diſcernment.

A child conſiders its painted toy as *a whole;* it has no notion of its parts, properties, or attributes. It is told that by wetting it, it will be deſtroyed. Unmindful of your warning, it drags it through water; the paint comes off, the glue diſſolves, and the whole fabric is demoliſhed.

"Did not I tell you, you little miſchie-
"vous monkey, that it would be deſtroyed!
"The little coach knew that you were
"naughty in diſobeying me, and it went
"to pieces."

Charming

Charming leſſon to the judgment this! much is it likely to improve under ſuch management!

"Come to me, my little fellow, and I "will let you ſee my reaſon for warning "you againſt wetting this toy. You ſee, "in the firſt place, that it was made up of "ſeparate pieces of wood, which, being "cut into the proper ſhape, were joined "together by means of a little glue; now "this glue or cement diſſolves in water, ſo "that you ſee the reaſon of its coming aſun-"der as ſoon as it was wet. Let the pieces "be dried, and you ſhall have a little ce-"ment to fix them together again yourſelf. "You know that the wood was at firſt "white, like the colour of the boards of "the floor; but when the coach was "made, the toyman put a little paint upon "it, which being ill made up, and ſlightly "laid on, was eaſily waſhed off. And now "you ſee, my dear, how I came to foretell "the conſequences of putting your toy "in water."

Not

Not a day, ſcarcely an hour, paſſes, in which a judicious and attentive mother may not find opportunities of improving the faculties of judgment and conception in her children. The great point to be attended to is the co-operation of theſe faculties in every point which ſhe explains. If ſhe goes beyond their reach, they will never be exerted. If ſhe does not diſcriminate, ſhe will, in her attempts at inſtructing the infant mind, be only giving a confuſed and indiſtinct knowledge of facts, inſtead of cultivating thoſe faculties by which alone real and uſeful knowledge can ever be acquired.

"Some are born to greatneſs, ſome atchieve greatneſs, and ſome have greatneſs thruſt upon them," ſays Falſtaff; and ſo it is with learning. It is too often *thruſt* upon children; and where it is ſo, we may venture to aſſert that greatneſs will never be atchieved. A truly great and comprehenſive mind was never yet formed by artificial

tificial means. In order to effect the compleat and perfect developement of the intellectual bloſſom, we muſt defend the bud from canker; we muſt expoſe it to the genial influence of the ſun of reaſon; we muſt nouriſh it by truth, and promote its expanſion by fertilizing the ſoil; but if we forcibly tear it open, we may bid adieu to all expectation of fruit.

Of all the faculties, that of judgment is moſt eſſentially injured by the injudicious ſpeed of our career in modern education. The judgment, indeed, has no time to operate, no opportunity for exertion. Every thing is preſented *ready-made*, if I may uſe the expreſſion, and the pupil has nothing to do but to cloath its memory with the garments provided for it; and where theſe are deficient, it muſt put up with the deficiency, for it has no materials wherewith to weave any for itſelf.

The propoſitions upon which it is the province of judgment to exerciſe its power, are

are all in their natures either true or falſe; and whether they be true or falſe, it is the buſineſs of judgment to aſcertain. By having been frequently exerciſed upon thoſe in which its conceptions were aſſiſted by the ſenſes, it comes by degrees to be prepared for deciding upon thoſe which are formed from ideas in the mind, the patterns of which are no longer preſent to the ſight.

Thus a child whoſe conceptions have been exerciſed upon numbers, ſo as to have acquired clear and diſtinct ideas of what is meant by one, two, three, &c. will more eaſily perceive the truth of the propoſition, that three times three are nine; than a younger child, whoſe conceptions have not been thus exerciſed, will perceive the truth of the propoſition, that one and one make two. To enable it to form a judgment upon this, it muſt have clear and diſtinct conceptions of the meaning of the words; and added to that, the judgment

ment muſt be aſſiſted by the perceptions; for without viſible or tangible objects, no knowledge of numbers, or judgments upon them, could be acquired.

In learning the power of numbers, the judgment is much improved, provided that the judgment be permitted to be duly exerciſed. But if we only aim at hurrying the pupil on as faſt as poſſible, through the rules of arithmetic, that we may be able to boaſt of its aſtoniſhing progreſs in having got to the *Rule of Three*, while others of the ſame age have not proceeded beyond ſimple Addition; the memory will probably have been the only faculty exerciſed throughout the whole proceſs. Throughout the whole courſe of education, children are great ſufferers from our having forgotten the proceſs by which we ourſelves acquired the knowledge we now poſſeſs. The intermediate ideas which ſerved as links in the chain of our original conceptions, have fled from our recollection; we therefore,

therefore, never think of preſenting them to the minds of our children: and yet without theſe connecting ideas, it is impoſſible that we ſhould ever ſucceed in communicating inſtruction.

For the ſlow, the ſteps of the ladder ſhould be ſhortened: and we ought to aſcertain their having firm footing upon one, before we urge their progreſs to another. For the quick, fewer ſteps will ſerve; but theſe ought to be examined with accuracy, ſoas thatthey may be retraced with certainty and preciſion; otherwiſe the pupil will be in danger of hurrying with precipitancy to the top, and then flying off to ſome other object; and will in vain endeavour to find again the way over the ſame ground.

Every judgment which the mind forms, is a diſtinct ſtep in the path of knowledge; and the abſurd attempts which are made to lift children at once into the regions of ſcience, are no leſs ridiculous, than would be our endeavours to make children walk with

with eaſe and gracefulneſs, by always carrying them in our arms. The uſe of the mental faculties, as well as of the limbs, muſt be acquired by exerciſe. Such is the law of nature, and we never gain by oppoſing her authority.

I have known children, who, from the time they could ſpeak, had maſters upon maſters to inſtruct them; and what was the conſequence? Mere prate; many words and few ideas. Let us ſuppoſe one of theſe children learning arithmetic; which, as I have before obſerved, may be made an uſeful means of ſtrengthening the faculty of Judgment. It is taught to repeat after the maſter, "five and two make "ſeven; ſeven and ſeven are fourteen," and ſo on; till by frequent repetition, the relative power of numbers is fixed in the memory; and thus it is able to get through Addition tolerably well. Next comes the Multiplication table, which it learns by rote, and applies in the ſame way, as often

as it is wanted. And ſo on through all the rules, the maſter aſſiſting all the time whenever the pupil is at any loſs, but never attempting to unfold a principle, or to give a ſingle idea upon the ſubject. I ſpeak from experience, as it is the way in which I myſelf was taught, and as I believe many others are.

Let us now ſuppoſe a child, whoſe conceptions have been gradually improved by the unceaſing, though almoſt imperceptible, efforts of a judicious and attentive parent. She marks the time when ideas upon the ſubject of numbers may be given with effect. She ſeizes the moſt proper period for beginning her inſtructions, or rather for leading the mind to inſtruct itſelf. By frequently recurring opportunities ſhe exerciſes the conceptions and the judgment upon units. She renders all the different combinations that can produce numbers under ten, familiar to theſe faculties; and then proceeds to add ten to ten, till the

conceptions

conceptions can embrace hundreds. Tables of numbers are then given to be ſummed up, and at every ſtep the judgment is taught to decide on its truth and certainty. Multiplication is explained as a ſhorter method of addition, and its principles unfolded in plain and eaſy terms. By frequent exerciſe, the mind becomes ſo familiar to the ſubject, that its knowledge appears intuitive; its ideas are all clear and accurate; and although the rules may not be gone through with a tenth part of the ſpeed, with which they were galloped over in the former inſtance; we cannot doubt, that when both pupils come to put their knowledge into practice, the latter will have a great and manifeſt advantage.

How, indeed, in the former caſe could the poor child poſſibly acquire clear ideas upon any ſubject, when it probably had twenty things to learn at the ſame time, all oppoſite in their natures, calling up different trains of ideas, and requiring different

ferent tones of [illegible] likewise movable, that in the [illegible] accompaniment is heard between the notes: ornaments, embellishments which are necessary to a perfect air: as graces: associate ideas of pleasure. And consequently of contempt is a manner which peculiarly necessary to some minuets. By these false associations the judgment is perverted as to every thing pertaining to it. These false associations the performer must avoid himself, who would have his taste pronounced a sound mind and vigorous understanding.

The conduct of the measure requires as much accuracy of calculation than the conduct of business; and the science of numbers, from first to last, being that which furnishes us with the most distinct ideas,* is of the most

* *The simple modes of number are of all the most distinct*; even the least variation, which is that making each combination as clearly different from that which approacheth nearest to it, as the most remote: *two* being as distinct from *one*, as *two* thousand.

moſt importance, not merely to the merchant and accomptant, but to every rational being. It ought beſides to be conſidered, that the mind makes uſe of number in all its ideas of duration and extenſion. Our ideas of infinity, with regard either to time or ſpace, are nothing but the infinity of number. Thoſe whoſe ideas concerning the powers of number are faint and confuſed, will be found to have very confuſed and inaccurate ideas upon many other ſubjects.

In the education of boys this is, perhaps, ſufficiently attended to; but why our own ſex ſhould be ſo utterly precluded, as they

and the ideas of *two* being as diſtinct from the ideas of *three*, as the magnitude of the whole earth is from that of a mite. This is not the caſe in other ſimple modes, in which it is not ſo eaſy, nor perhaps poſſible for us, to diſtinguiſh betwixt two approaching ideas; for who will undertake to find a difference (in his conceptions) between the white of this paper and that of the next degree to it? or can form diſtinct ideas of every, the leaſt exceſs in extenſion.—*See Locke on the Human Underſtanding.*

generally

generally are, from this moſt uſeful branch of knowledge, can only be accounted for from the prevalence of that falſe aſſociation, which renders every thing that wears the appearance of real uſefulneſs diſgraceful to us. Hence it comes, that whatever has a tendency to ſtrengthen the judgment is either totally omitted, or ſo ſuperficially run over, in female education, that it appears as if judgment were a faculty which females never, in any ſituation of life, could have occaſion for. A little reflection upon this ſubject would ſurely convince us of the contrary. A little reflection would teach us, that in every ſituation in which a female can be placed; whether ſhe be free or ſubordinate; whether ſhe moves in an exalted ſphere, or be reduced to the duties of an inferior one; in public and in private; abroad or at home; judgment is ever neceſſary, ever eſſential;—and that whatever be her rank and ſituation in ſociety, if judgment do not form her opinions,

and

and direct her conduct, she will become an object of contempt.

Beautiful imbecility will be admired, it is true; but let us apply to numerical rules, and calculate the period of this admiration. What proportion does it bear to the length of human life? What is the sum total of the advantages to be derived from it, when compared with those which would be experienced in the capability of fulfilling, with honour and propriety, the duties of a wife, a mother, the mistress of a family, the prudent adviser, and the faithful friend? Is it acting with wisdom and consistency, in the first place, to do all in our power to deprive beings of the use of this faculty, and then to plunge them into situations where its exertion is absolutely necessary? This is the argument, (and an unanswerable one it is) which can alone be used with propriety by the advocates of the frail fair ones, when pleading in extenuation of their foul offences in our courts of justice.

Were

Were this argument to be adorned, as it might, by the eloquence of an Erſkine or a Garrow, it would do more towards opening the eyes of the public to the conſequences of an education merely ornamental, than all that can be written upon the ſubject by the divine or moraliſt.

Let it be repreſented to the juries, who are called (alas, ſo often!) to pronounce upon the heinous conduct of ſhameleſs matrons, that the creatures, whoſe crimes are thus expoſed to public ſcorn, can ſcarcely be deemed accountable agents; ſince, in our ideas of accountableneſs, rationality is always included. Now ample proof can be brought, that from the cradle upwards every poſſible pains have been taken to deſtroy the rational faculty. Without judgment, there can be no knowledge of firſt principles; without firſt principles, there can be no rule of conduct or of duty. How, then, can creatures be ſaid to tranſgreſs againſt principles which they never had it

in

in their power to comprehend? They were taught, that the ſole duty of woman was *to be amiable.* That in order to be amiable, they muſt be accompliſhed and genteel; that is to ſay, that they muſt learn to dance, and dreſs, and "nickname GOD's "creatures;" to talk ſentiment, to affect ſenſibility, and to follow faſhion into whatever follies ſhe may lead. Have they not done all this? And now mark the inconſiſtency of man! They are accuſed of ſinning againſt the laws of GOD and of their country; when they can call GOD, their country, and their parents, to witneſs, that their judgment was never ſufficiently cultivated to pronounce upon the truth and propriety of a ſingle precept, moral or divine! They were taught to look on perſonal admiration as the chief good; when they found it was no longer to be expected from the huſband, were they to blame for ſeeking it in the admirer? Of all that they were taught to believe amiable, they are

ſtill

ſtill poſſeſſed; for no one eſtimable quality of the heart or underſtanding was in the catalogue! Senſibility and ſentiment compriſed their only notions of virtue; and by giving way to ſenſibility and ſentiment they became adultereſſes; or to ſpeak in the more delicate terms of modern refinement, *amiable unfortunates.*

To the effects of a pernicious education, and not to the frailty of the ſex, ought the natural conſequences of a want of principle to be aſſigned. Such a change in the mode of education as would expand the powers of intellect, enable the mind to embrace truth, to perceive the utility and advantage of moral rectitude, and to regulate the paſſions and affections of the heart by the laws of piety and wiſdom, would do more towards putting a ſtop to the career of vice, in every rank and ſtation in ſociety, than all the laws and puniſhments the legiſlature can deviſe. Pardon, my Friend, pardon, I beſeech you, a digreſſion into which I have

I have been unwarily hurried; and leaving the *amiable* and *accomplished* frail ones to reap the fruit of the erroneous ideas they have imbibed, let us turn to the conſideration of the judging faculty, by the due cultivation of which theſe fatal errors in conduct may happily be avoided.

Having firſt exerciſed the judgment by means of the perceptive faculties, it gradually becomes ripe for perceiving the truth of propoſitions, the ſubjects of which are not immediate objects of ſenſe. The propoſition, for inſtance, *that the ſame cauſe will always produce the ſame effect*, though the foundation of our reaſoning in many ſciences, as well as in morals, is firſt made clear to the underſtanding by means of the ſenſes. To render the conceptions upon this, and ſimilar propoſitions, clear, diſtinct, and accurate, is, I believe, of much more importance, than is generally imagined. In the words in which I have delivered the propoſition, a child would not apprehend

apprehend its meaning: But ſhew him, that while he ſtrikes his ball againſt the wall with force, it will always rebound with proportional activity; and that when he throws it gently, the re-action will be proportionably weaker; he will ſoon underſtand your meaning. You may make him ſenſible, by a thouſand familiar examples, that the ſame law extends throughout all matter, and that wherever there appears any variation in the effect, from cauſes apparently ſimilar, we may be aſſured, that the ſimilarity is only apparent, but that, in reality, the cauſe is different. Such inſtructions tend to awaken and keep alive attention, while they preſerve the mind from vulgar prejudices and ſuperſtitions; which all originate in confined views, and want of accurate obſervation. The effect they have in ſtrengthening the judgment, is evident from the conduct of thoſe whoſe judging faculties have never been thus cultivated. Propoſitions, which appear intuitive

tuitive to others, ſeem abſurd to thoſe whoſe conceptions are habitually dull and languid for want of cultivation; while the judgment, that has never been exerciſed on the objects of perception, takes every thing for granted without examination. Hence that credulity, with regard to the marvellous, which is a diſgrace to the enlightened age in which we live.

When a child has had the connexion betwixt cauſe and effect ſufficiently impreſſed upon the mind by means of exterior objects, it will more eaſily comprehend the application of the ſame principle to morals.

That a want of veracity produces loſs of confidence as its inevitable conſequence, is a truth of which the judgment may be made ſenſible at an early period; and indeed, while this faculty is uncorrupted by ſelfiſhneſs, it will ſeldom fail to decide with preciſion on every point of juſtice. Eaſily may the judgment be led to perceive that good-nature and affectionate diſpoſitions produce, as their effect, complacency

and affection in the breaſts of others; that eſteem is the natural conſequence of integrity, wiſdom, and benevolence; and that all the malevolent and diſſocial paſſions beget diſpleaſure and hatred. But in order to fix theſe aſſociations in the mind, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the conduct of the parent ſhould give invariable teſtimony to their truth. If the ſame conduct in the child be at one time found fault with, and at another gets leave to paſs unnoticed; if praiſe or blame are beſtowed not according to deſert, but according to preſent humour, theſe principles will never gain a firm eſtabliſhment in the heart. Following your example, your child will learn to like and diſlike from motives of caprice; and falſe expectations of gaining love and favour, without being at any pains to merit eſteem, will lay the foundation of many bitter diſappointments.

You will, perhaps, object, that happineſs and the world's eſteem, are not always the inevitable

inevitable reſult of virtuous conduct; and that by teaching children to expect them as certain effects, we ſhould lead them into error, and expoſe them to mortification.

To this I anſwer, that though envy and malignity are apt to detract from merit, this very detraction ſhews a conſciouſneſs that eſteem and approbation are the natural conſequences of virtuous conduct; and that it is in hopes of obſtructing this natural effect, that malevolence exerts its influence. Should it unfortunately ſucceed, it can only ſucceed with regard to our fellow-mortals. A powerful argument for endeavouring to approve ourſelves to a higher power! A convincing proof of the inefficacy of all moral ſyſtems, that reſt not on a more ſolid foundation than the applauſe of thoſe who are frail and liable to error!

Seldom, however, even from our fellow men, is the pure and upright conduct of the humble and the worthy denied the meed of approbation and eſteem. It is when

when we ſolicit the praiſe of the many, and not when we wiſh for the eſteem of the good, that we are liable to diſappointment. This obſervation receives ample ſupport from the records of hiſtory and the annals of private life. Never, in all our reſearches, ſhall we find an inſtance, where unoſtentatious benevolence, juſtice, wiſdom, and piety, were refuſed the eſteem and approbation of mankind, unleſs where *party hatred*, by its deadly poiſon, blinded the eyes, and envenomed the heart. By this was the furious multitude influenced againſt the Saviour of the world! By this have many who *call themſelves* his diſciples, been enflamed to cruelty and vengeance againſt their more deſerving brethren.

The analyzation of party ſpirit can never take place in the moſt of fermentation; but when that has ſufficiently ſubſided to permit us to examine it minutely, it will appear compounded of fear, hatred, pride, envy, malice, and cruelty. As it operates

moſt

moſt violently upon ignorance, there can be no better preſervative from its attacks, than a ſtrong and cultivated judgment, together with conceptions ſo clear, acute, and accurate, as to embrace the whole of the arguments, and to perceive the whole of the errors, on both ſides of every queſtion that is agitated.

Nothing can be more inimical to the cultivation of judgment, than an early initiation into party prejudices. By theſe the conceptions are miſled, and the judgments concerning right and wrong muſt conſequently be often erroneous. It is, at any time of life, fatal to the integrity of the moral character, to approve or diſapprove according to the dictates of affection. The habit of doing ſo is to the young particularly injurious: it not only warps the judgment, but depraves the heart.

Did the cultivation of judgment once become an object in female education, the zeal of fair pollticians might, perhaps, ſuffer

her ſome abatement; an evil that would not probably be productive of any very fatal conſequences to ſociety. Unbiaſſed judgment will perceive, that wiſdom dwells with moderation, and that firmneſs of conduct is ſeldom united with outrageous violence of ſentiment. Cultivated judgment will not produce indifference to the intereſt and happineſs of the community at large, nor will it lead the mind to be contented with profound ignorance concerning the nature and origin of points which are the objects of political diſpute; but it will reſtrain wrath, and keep the individual in the path of duty. Happily for our ſex, this leads not to the theatre of public ſtrife. Were the judgment to be exerciſed in finding out this path in the eventful period of political diſunion, bleſſed would be the conſequences that muſt inevitably enſue! To heal the wounds of contention; to cool the raging fury of party animoſity; to ſoften the rugged ſpirit of reſentment; to allay

the

the fervour of ambition; and to check the cruelty of revenge; would, to enlightened judgment, appear as the peculiar duty of thoſe, who, not being called on to take an active part, are, by this neutral ſituation, marked out as the mediators and peace-makers of ſociety!

Let us ourſelves enquire, and let us endeavour to give our children, ſuch clear conceptions upon the ſubject, as may leave them at no loſs to pronounce on the conſequences of a conduct marked by benevolence, wiſdom, and moderation; in oppoſition to the effects produced by violent prejudice, blind zeal, and cruel intolerance.

Hiſtory preſents us with an inſtructive portrait of the human paſſions; but it is of the paſſions principally as they are actuated by ambition. Without previous care to ſtrengthen the judgment, Hiſtory, therefore, by the intereſt which it excites in the fate of heroes and conquerors, may be inſtrumental in awakening ambition, and kindling

kindling the flame of falſe glory in an ardent mind. The hiſtorian who does not catch a portion of his hero's ſpirit, and enter with warmth into his intereſts, will be cold and inanimate. He who does, will be apt to throw falſe colours over actions that are in their natures, baſe and vile; to extenuate what is reprehenſible; and ſometimes to extol what is undeſerving of ſober approbation. Thus are the moral notions of youth in danger of being corrupted, from the very ſources which we had aſſigned for their nouriſhment and improvement. This, I believe, to be often the caſe with boys: and is the inevitable conſequence of permitting the imagination to get the ſtart of judgment. Were the judgment to be exerciſed in tracing *cauſe* and *effect*, as they are delineated in the hiſtoric page; the ardent youth, inſtead of being dazzled by the falſe luſtre of ſplendid atchievements, would purſue their conſequences to the human race, and ſee

wide ſpread ruin, pain, miſery, and devaſtation, the awful price of ſhort-lived glory.

The various advantages accruing from the ſtudy of hiſtory are too numerous and too important to admit of being fully deſcribed in ſuch an imperfect ſketch: ſuffice it to ſay, that under the direction of a judicious preceptor, it cannot fail to enlarge the conceptions, to increaſe the number of ideas, to improve the judgment, and to ſtrengthen moral and religious principle in the heart. The mere knowledge of dates and epochs, of the names of ſovereigns, and the length of their ſucceſſive reigns, and even of the principle features that marked the character of every prince, and of the moſt remarkable events that took place in every age, will go a very little way towards intellectual improvement. This is the knowledge and the ſole knowledge that can be obtained from abridgements. From theſe, therefore, none of the moral uſes of hiſtory can poſſibly be derived.

rived. The aſſociations they give are merely thoſe of time and place, which, as we have already ſeen, are the only aſſociations familiar to the vulgar. Abridgements of hiſtory are merely to be conſidered as exerciſes of the memory; and whoever expects by their means the improvement of any other faculty, will be miſerably diſappointed.

Are, then, abridgements of no uſe? To the young, I certainly think they are of none, and worſe than of none; for I deem it much ſafer for the mind to be deſtitute of all ideas upon any ſubject, than to have thoſe which are confuſed and indiſtinct. But to ſuch as have in youth laid in an ample fund of information, when that information begins to fade on the memory, abridgments may be found of great ſervice. They give the outlines which the mind is in poſſeſſion of materials to fill up. Every event which they record, awakens a chain of aſſociations, and revives ideas which had become

become in a manner extinct. To the learned, therefore, ought the uſe of abridgments to be confined; while to the minds that are on their progreſs to improvement, full, clear, diſtinct, and accurate ideas ought to be given upon every ſubject propoſed to their conſideration.

Here again we may obſerve the conſequence of that impatience and precipitancy which in ſo many inſtances defeats the great purpoſes of education. By our impatience to make our children perfect in knowledge, we in reality preſent an inſuperable bar to its acquirement. We cramp the powers of the ſoul, and leſſen its capabilities. We teach it to ſkim the ſurface of ſcience, and indolently to acquieſce in ſuperficial attainments. Thus we produce a race of praters who know nothing; of talkers who never think; of light, trifling, and fantaſtic beings, alike deſtitute of intellectual vigour and of ſolid principle. You, my Friend, who live in bleſt retirement,

ment, ſee little of this. Let thoſe who are converſant with what is called *the world*, pronounce upon its truth!

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

JUDGMENT.

Observations upon the Method to be pursued in reading History.—Premature Cultivation of Imagination hurtful to Judgment. Other Obstacles to its Improvement examined.—Mode of Female education formerly adopted, more favourable to Judgment than the modern.—Examples.

YOUR obſervations, my deareſt Friend, convince me, that I have not ſufficiently explained myſelf, with regard to the uſe of hiſtory in early education. My objection to abridgements does not, as you ſuppoſe, extend to thoſe little nurſery catalogues of kings and queens, whether in verſe or proſe. I think, on the contrary, that ſuch chronological epitomes, committed to

to memory at that period when words are moſt eaſily retained in it, may be of great advantage. This can never be miſtaken for a knowledge of hiſtory; which, I fear, a ſuperficial acquaintance with the contents of larger abridgements very frequently is. You ſay that "it is impoſſible for child-"ren to read voluminous hiſtories at a "very early age;" and I entirely agree in your opinion.

I ſpoke of hiſtory, as affording ſtriking examples of the truth of the propoſition concerning cauſe and effect, upon which I ſuppoſed the judgment to have been for ſome time exerciſed. From the whole ſcope and tenor of my argument, it will appear ſufficiently obvious, that I adopt, as a fundamental principle, the impoſſibility of any exerciſe of judgment, where there are not clear and diſtinct conceptions. But there may be very clear and diſtinct conceptions of the cauſes and conſequences of particular events, and the mind may be ca-

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pable of forming very juſt and accurate ideas concerning particular inſtances of human conduct, long before it is capable of embracing a ſeries of complicated and ſucceſſive events. Long before it has ſtrength to wield the maſſy chain, it may be capable of examining an individual link.

Hence it appears to me, that the judgment will be exerciſed to more advantage; by a minute inveſtigation of a detached period of hiſtory, judiciouſly choſen, than by the peruſal of the abridged hiſtory of ages. Fully appriſed of the narrow limits of its information, the mind will be in no danger of that ſhallow conceit which conſtantly attends the ſuperficial. It will be prompted to acquire further knowledge for itſelf; and, by having been put upon the method of exerciſing judgment upon every ſubject it inveſtigates, its enquiries will never fail to be attended with advantage.

Againſt the morality of the tales of inſtruction now in general uſe, I make no objection;

objection; becauſe, whether theſe fictitious repreſentations of events be moral or otherwiſe, they are alike inimical to our deſign of cultivating the faculties according to the order in which they are developed by the hand of nature.

I hope I have made it plainly appear, that judgment is coeval with the faculty of conception; and that both faculties muſt be cultivated by means of the external ſenſes. But fancy or imagination has a diſtinct and peculiar province; and I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that if judgment has not been ſufficiently ſtrengthened before the powers of fancy are called into exerciſe, there is little reaſon to hope that the faculty of judgment will ever afterwards attain perfection. Now, by far the greater number of entertaining ſtories which I have ever read, are addreſſed ſolely to the imagination. They may produce ſenſations favourable to the cultivation of the affections; but the judgment, ſo far from receiving

ceiving any improvement from their perusal, muſt be lulled aſleep, before the fancy is ſufficiently awakened to follow the ſtory. When, indeed, the judgment has been previouſly exerciſed upon firſt principles, ſo as to have clear and diſtinct notions of cauſe and effect, it will be competent to decide on the probability or improbability of ſuppoſed events; and from the impulſe of the moral ſenſe, the mind will take pleaſure in contemplating the laws of poetical juſtice. But where the vain attempt is made to impreſs firſt principles upon the mind by means of fictions addreſſed to the imagination, the judgment will take no part in the deciſion. By a ſucceſſion of theſe intereſting tales, the minds of the quick and ardent will be filled with wild and incoherent images, falſe aſſociations, romantic ideas—and imprudent conduct will be the certain reſult. Nor will the conſequence be leſs fatal to the ſlow and indolent: conſcious of the languid flow of their ideas,

ideas, they have much gratification in whatever, without exertion on their parts, accelerates their courſe. To children of this deſcription, therefore, books of amuſement are thought particularly uſeful. But would we give ourſelves the trouble to examine a little farther than the ſurface, we would be convinced, that the great object with reſpect to ſuch minds is to rouſe them to an active exertion of their faculties; whereas, by merely following the tale of fancy, they indulge the inclination to indolence.

While I thus expreſs my diſapprobation of thoſe fictions which ſtimulate the imagination, while they retard the operation of judgment; it may be neceſſary to ſay ſomething of thoſe which are addreſſed to the judgment, and manifeſtly aim at its improvement. Fictions of this nature are nothing more than examples tending to elucidate propoſitions ſubmitted to the judgment, by placing them in a conſpicu-

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ous point of view. They ought, of neceſſity, to be ſimple, clear, and perſpicuous. Such were the parables by which our bleſſed Lord vouchſafed to inſtruct his unenlightened auditors; every one of which will, upon examination, be found to be excluſively addreſſed to the judgment. Let the learned reader compare with theſe the wild fictions of the Koran, which are all addreſſed to the imagination; and while he ſees in the former the manifeſtations of Divine wiſdom, let him be careful not to follow the method of inſtruction of which the latter is a model.

To educate youth by means of pretty ſtories, though a ſyſtem which has been but lately introduced into this country, has been for ages practiſed by all the Oriental nations. Let us look to its effects on the inhabitants of Aſia. What vigour of intellect, what ſtrength of genius, has it there produced? Let us behold its operations in the imbecility and indolence that marks the

Eaſtern

Eaſtern character: and with ſuch glaring proofs of its fatal conſequences before our eyes, let us beware of enfeebling the minds of the riſing generation by a ſimilar procedure.

The ſwarm of heterogeneous abſurdities that daily iſſue from the preſs under the appellation of Novels, would (if any had ſufficient command of patience for inveſtigating their contents) afford the moſt convincing proof of the effects produced upon the mind by calling forth the imagination, while the powers of judgment are ſuffered to lie dormant. In theſe writers, we behold the powers of fancy employed in making the moſt abſurd combinations from the few confuſed and inaccurate ideas they happen to poſſeſs. We ſee invention on the ſtretch to produce effects to which the cauſes aſſigned are totally inadequate; the laws of nature violated; the courſe of the paſſions miſrepreſented; the principles of morality ſet at defiance; and the whole mixed

mixed up with a jargon of ſentiment, which is incomprehenſible to plain common ſenſe. Yet ſo voracious is the appetite for novelty in thoſe who have never been taught the exerciſe of judgment, that ſuch books are read, aye, *and none but ſuch*, by numbers of young women, who hope in due time to become the mothers of hopeful families!

The train of ideas introduced into the mind by the hyperbolical language of fiction, is found ſo agreeable to the young, ſo favourable to the indulgence of that luxurious indolence, to which moſt have ſome propenſity; that it is no wonder that minds, to which ſuch trains of ideas have become habitual, ſhould find it difficult, if not impoſſible, to turn the current of thought into other channels. Now nothing can be more evident, than that every proceſs of reaſoning, whether on the nature of material objects, or upon ſubjects of ſpeculation, requires a train of thought, a ſeries of diſtinct and clear ideas; and I

leave

leave it for you to decide, whether it is by accuſtoming the mind to the train of thought produced by fiction, that it can be beſt prepared for this exerciſe of the intellectual powers. Is there not rather ſome reaſon to apprehend, that minds, which, inſtead of having had the perceptions exerciſed on ſenſible objects, and the powers of conception and judgment gradually unfolded by the ſame means, have been taught all they know through the medium of the imagination, will never through life exerciſe any other faculty? All the ideas of right and wrong, juſt and unjuſt, probable and improbable, will be tinged with the falſe colouring imperceptibly received from the train of incongruous and fictitious images perpetually paſſing through the mind. But where the reaſoning powers have been habitually exerciſed on adequate objects, the train of ideas, which occupy the fancy, will no longer be of the nature of unprofitable or pernicious viſions;

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they will be the parents of genius, of invention, of exalted purpoſes, of good reſolutions, and of meritorious conduct.

The cultivation of judgment, ſo far from preſenting any obſtacle to the enjoyment of the pleaſures of imagination, is abſolutely neceſſary towards their being enjoyed in any ſuperior degree. Who would compare the pleaſure enjoyed by a cultivated mind in peruſing the exquiſite compoſitions of a Homer, a Shakeſpeare, or a Milton, to that which a novel-reading Miſs receives from the eventful tale that beguiles her of her midnight ſlumber? Nay, laying theſe higher works of genius out of the queſtion, let us ſuppoſe two young people employed in reading one of Miſs Burney's admirable pictures of life, (which, for want of an appropriate term, likewiſe go under the denomination of Novels) and that one of theſe young perſons has had her mind furniſhed with ideas, her conceptions vigorous and acute, her judgment

ſtrengthened

ſtrengthened by exerciſe, and her affections governed by the well-examined principles of moral rectitude;—while the other, inſtructed by means of fiction, has had her ſenſibilities exerciſed while judgment was ſuffered to lie dormant, her conceptions weak, her ideas few and confuſed, and her moral principles mere feelings directed by prejudice. The love of novelty is equally ſtrong in both; both purſue the thread of the ſtory with equal ardour. But in the courſe of the peruſal, how many ſources of pleaſure are open to the one, which, to the other, are totally unknown. With admiration the one contemplates the genius diſplayed in the conduct of the fable; ſhe marks each trait of character, enters into the train of aſſociations by which it is produced, obſerves how naturally they ſpring from the ſituation of the perſon deſcribed; and perceives how juſtly the author has pourtrayed the inevitable conſequences of the conduct to which they lead.

Every ſentiment, every moral reflection, attracts her notice, and calls forth the powers of judgment. Her vigorous conceptions embrace every idea of the author, and her cultivated mind feels all the exquiſite emotions of taſte.—A thouſand images which have called forth theſe emotions in her ſoul, have paſſed unnoticed by her companion. To the fate of the lovers her intereſt is ſolely confined, and every thing that protracts the knowledge of their deſtiny, to her appears tedious and impertinent. She receives not from the work one idea in addition to her ſlender ſtock; and when once her curioſity has been gratified by the denouement, her mind is compleatly vacated, or only filled with ſome fleeting images of viſionary bliſs.

Where trains of thought romantic and unprofitable occupy the imagination, they frequently acquire ſuch power over the attention as to render its exertion upon preſent objects quite impoſſible. Abſence of

mind

mind is not a failing peculiar to thoſe who are deeply engaged in abſtract ſtudies and purſuits; it is common to all who have not had the faculty of attention early and properly cultivated. Where it has thus been cultivated, every common occurrence of life, every topic of converſation, every new object which preſents itſelf to the eye, every ſound which ſtrikes the ear, is diſtinctly diſcriminated, and becomes the ſource of new ideas; but wherever, by the early exerciſe of imagination, the mind has acquired the habit of indulging in viſionary reveries, it neither ſees, hears, underſtands, marks, nor inwardly digeſts, what paſſes around it. Of this abſence of mind we muſt have obſerved innumerable inſtances; and may, at little expence of reflection, be made fully ſenſible, that it muſt preſent a fatal obſtacle to all intellectual improvement. Where the conceptions and the judgment have been early exerciſed on the objects of perception, I believe this abſence

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of mind will rarely be met with. Where they have not been thus exerciſed, I believe it to be inevitable.

Suppoſing that the faculty of judgment has been exerciſed in your pupil ſo as to have attained to ſome degree of ſtrength, it will ſtill be ſubject to perverſion from many cauſes internal and external, which it is the particular buſineſs of the preceptor to guard againſt. Of theſe corruptors of the judgment, it will be ſufficient for our preſent purpoſe to mention thoſe which are moſt likely to aſſault it in the early ſtage of which we now treat; recommending it to the reader who wiſhes for fuller information upon this important ſubject, to conſult Doctor Iſaac Watts, who, in his Eſſay on Logic, or the Right Uſe of Reaſon, has given a very ſatisfactory view of the ſeveral cauſes by which the judgment is liable to be perverted.

I have all along inſiſted upon the neceſſity of cultivating the faculties of conception

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tion and judgment, by means of a ſtrict attention to ſenſible objects. But if care be not taken to point out the fallacy of the ſenſes, or, to ſpeak more properly, to ſhew the extent of their power, our pupils may be led into many errors by putting too much confidence in their perceptions.

By truſting to the evidence of ſenſe, mankind, in the infancy of ſcience, judged the world to be an extenſive plain; the ſun to be a ſmall luminous body which roſe from behind a high mountain, or from the boſom of the ocean, and performed its daily journey through the heavens; and the moon and the ſtars to be of the ſame inſignificant magnitude as they appeared to the naked eye. And though more enlightened notions concerning the heavenly bodies are now made familiar to children, even in the nurſery, than was formerly known to ſages; ſtill, by truſting to the evidence of their ſenſes, children are liable to errors of judgment, which, if not attended to, may lay

lay the foundation of future prejudices. Theſe a truly liberal education will doubtleſs deſtroy. But if once theſe prejudices have taken root in the mind, it is not by going through the common routine of *accompliſhments* that they will ever be extirpated.

The credulity natural to youth is another fruitful ſource of erroneous judgment. It will act with particular force upon minds that have never been accuſtomed to the actual examination of ſenſible objects. It is only the imbecility of ignorance, or the vanity of ſcepticiſm, that ſuppoſes any thing to exiſt without a cauſe. A ſenſible child will ſoon be convinced that it is impoſſible; and the mind cannot be better exerciſed in early life, than in diſcovering the cauſes of appearances with which it is familiar, but for which it knows not how to account. A boy obſerves that his top ſpins as long as it is kept in motion; tell him, when he aſks you why it does ſo, "that it is the nature of all tops," or that "it ſpins be-

"cauſe

"cauſe it is whipped," and you lay the foundation for indifference or credulity. But if, inſtead of giving theſe fooliſh anſwers, you explain the real cauſe, and teach him to look out for ſimilar examples of the operation of the laws of gravitation, you will probably be doing the faculty of judgment a greater ſervice than it could have received from the longeſt and moſt laborious taſk.

It may be objected to this, that many mothers have not the degree of information requiſite to enable them to communicate ſuch ſort of knowledge to their children. And is it becauſe they are mothers, that it is too late to obtain it? What motive to the acquirement of knowledge half ſo powerful, as that which operates upon a mother's heart? This motive, ſtrong as it ought to be in all caſes, will become ſtill more weighty, when we conſider that another very ample ſource of erroneous judgment is found to proceed from that arro-

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gant confidence which frequently attends the conſciouſneſs of quickneſs of parts. All mothers wiſh their children to be diſtinguiſhed by a quick capacity; but dearly do they ſometimes pay for the accompliſhment of this wiſh! Soon does the child perceive the mother's incapability of affording it information. She ſeeks to engage its affections by indulgence—by indulgence it learns to deſpiſe her authority. She is ſolicitous for the improvement of the genius in which ſhe glories; every ſtep which the child advances in the path of knowledge, is a degradation to the mother in its eſteem. Her admonitions are without weight, her injunctions without authority. If it be a ſon whom ſhe thus ſees exalted to a ſuperior, ſhe may, perhaps, be proud to acknowledge the ſuperiority, and though ſhe feels herſelf neglected and deſpiſed, rejoice in the world's acknowledging her ſon for a man of genius; but if it be a daughter, whom ſhe has thus taught to look

look down upon her, deep and many will be the wounds of her heart!

A mother, to be truly reſpectable in the eyes of her children, muſt not only be to them as a tender protector, a perpetual ſolace, and the ſource of every joy—but as a guide and oracle; one to whom they are to apply in every perplexity, from whom they are at all times certain of receiving light. The mother, who is capable of fulfilling the former part of the parental character only, will ſoon find that not all the tenderneſs and affection ſhe can ſhew, will procure for her that filial reſpect and veneration which is the precious reward of maternal ſufferings and anxieties. To be truly reſpectable in the eyes of her offſpring, a mother muſt be capable of inſtructing them. But is it by the common mode of boarding-ſchool education that ſhe is to attain this capability? Alas! no. Her perceptions have been there exerciſed, it is true; and the memory of perception likewiſe.

likewiſe. But what has been done for the eſſential faculties of conception and judgment? How, without the cultivation of theſe, is ſhe to be capable of communicating inſtruction to others? Impoſſible. But is it too late for her to ſet about the cultivation of theſe faculties in herſelf? The belief that it is ſo, is a fatal deluſion. Do we not ſee frequent inſtances of men who have paſſed their youth in idleneſs, but who, at a period of life when many women are mothers of families, begin to make up for loſt time by ſerious application to thoſe ſtudies which they had formerly neglected? Do we not ſee ſuch men ſucceed in their attempts? Do we not ſometimes ſee thoſe who were at twenty idle, ignorant, and uninformed, become, in a few years after, men of ſcience and information? Why, then, ſhould a woman of twenty, or of any age, think that becauſe ſhe is married, all improvement is impoſſible? Impoſſible I grant it is, if ſhe intends

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to lead a life of modern diſſipation. If her mornings are to be ſpent in the ſtreet, and her evenings at the card-table, improvement is out of the queſtion. But it is not to ſuch mothers that I addreſs myſelf. There are thoſe of a different deſcription; amiable, well-intentioned, domeſtic characters, who have an earneſt wiſh to fulfil every duty, but who, from a fatal prejudice, do not conſider an acceſſion of knowledge as any of the duties belonging to the matron ſtate. Let ſuch ſeriouſly reflect in what light they would wiſh to be viewed by their children, and as they would deſire to be reſpected, let them purſue the courſe that can alone render them reſpectable.

Happy the woman, who, in her endeavours to improve and cultivate her underſtanding, finds an auxiliary in her huſband! Happy ſhe, who is thus encouraged to the delightful and important taſk! Her ſucceſs is infallible, her reward is certain.

But

But if her huſband be *one of the multitude*; if fate has bound her to a man who deſpiſes female intellect; whoſe idea of matrimonial felicity includes not the companion and the friend; who merely wiſhes in his wife to find the qualities of the houſekeeper, and the virtues of the ſpaniel; even then the wife is without excuſe, who does not endeavour to qualify herſelf for fulfilling the duties of the mother. Let her conſider, that in the reſpect and eſteem of her children ſhe will find a ſolace for the want of that pureſt ſpecies of happineſs which flows from congenial ſentiment, mutual confidence, and mutual eſteem. Her huſband may not be willing to allow her ſuperiority of wiſdom, (and if ſhe be truly wiſe, ſhe will never contend for it) but her children will riſe and call her bleſſed!

Let us now return to the conſideration of that arrogant confidence in ſelf-opinion, which is ſo frequently the reſult of a child's finding itſelf in ſome inſtances wiſer than

its

its mother. This generally produces a degree of dogmatiſm very unfavourable to the improvement of judgment. "By what "means ſoever," ſays the reſpectable Watts, "the dogmatiſt comes by his opi- "nions, whether by his ſenſes or his "fancy, his education or his own reading, "yet he believes them all with the ſame "aſſurance that he does a mathematical "truth; he has ſcarce any *probabilities* that "belong to him; every thing with him "is *certain* and infallible. Perſons of this "temper are ſeldom to be convinced of "any miſtake; a full aſſurance of their "own notions makes all the difficulties on "their own ſide vaniſh ſo entirely, that "they think every point of their belief is "written as with ſun-beams, and wonder "any one ſhould find a difficulty in it."

The more the judgment is exerciſed in early life, the leſs liable will it be to this proud confidence in its own authority, which is never connected with true wiſdom, though

though it is a frequent attendant upon quick parts, ſuperficially cultivated; as is likewiſe its oppoſite—SCEPTICISM.

"The dogmatiſt is ſure of every thing—"the ſceptic believes nothing. Perhaps "he has found himſelf often miſtaken in "matters of which he thought himſelf "well aſſured in his younger days, and "therefore he is afraid to give aſſent to "any thing again."

"Both theſe prejudices," continues our author, "though they are ſo oppoſite to "each other, yet they ariſe from the ſame "ſpring, and that is, *impatience of ſtudy*, "*and want of diligent attention in the ſearch* "*of truth*. The dogmatiſt is in haſte to "believe ſomething; he cannot keep him-"ſelf long enough in ſuſpence, till ſome "bright and convincing evidence appears "on one ſide; but throws himſelf caſually "into the ſentiments of one party or ano-"ther, and then he will hear no argument "to the contrary. The ſceptic will not

"take

" take pains to ſearch things to the bottom;
" but when he ſees difficulties on both
" ſides, reſolves to believe neither of them."

It ſometimes happens, that theſe diſpoſitions are united. Who more dogmatical and peremptory than the ſceptic in his ſyſtem of unbelief?

Doctor Watts aſſures us, that " the " only cure for both theſe follies is *humi-* " *lity of ſoul, patience in ſtudy, diligence in* " *inquiry, with an honeſt zeal for truth.*"

What he mentions as a cure, I would recommend to parents to teach their children as a prevention. All the diſorders of the mind are much more eaſily prevented than remedied. Where pride and ſelf-will have been permitted to take deep root, it will be a difficult taſk to inculcate true humility. Where the faculty of attention has never been ſufficiently exerciſed, we cannot expect either patience in ſtudy, or diligence in enquiry. And where the mind has not been accuſtomed to find pleaſure in the diſcovery

of

of truth, we need not expect that it will ever exert much zeal in its purſuit.

Another ſource of error, concerning which it behoves us to be upon our guard, is that diſpoſition to reſt upon authority, which, if we do not take care to prevent it, may ſpring from that confidence in our ſuperior wiſdom and knowledge, which it is eſſential that the pupil ſhould poſſeſs.

It requires, I confeſs, great delicacy of conduct to impreſs the pupil with perfect confidence in our judgment, and at the ſame time to lead him to exert his own, as if he had no ſuch authority to rely upon. The only method by which it appears to me that this can poſſibly be effected, is early to lead the mind to thoſe inveſtigations, of which we certainly know the reſult. The child will then perceive the ſteps by which we were led to the knowledge we poſſeſs. He will perceive that our advantage over him is the effect of diligent enquiry and actual reſearch, not of intuition.

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We may then, without any apprehenſion of being leſſened in his opinion, candidly confeſs our ignorance upon ſubjects which have lain out of our line of purſuit, and uſe our very ignorance of theſe as an argument for his exerting himſelf to obtain a ſuperior degree of information. The boy, who has been accuſtomed to receive daily proofs of his mother's wiſdom and knowledge upon important points, will be in no danger of loſing his reſpect for her attainments or underſtanding, becauſe he finds her ignorant of Latin or of Mathematics. But if, inſtead of being led to exerciſe his own judgment, he has been taught every thing as dogmas of our ſuperior wiſdom, he will acquieſce in our judgment as infallible, and the diſpoſition implicitly to rely upon authority will render him the ſlave of prejudice for ever.

This reliance upon authority is repreſented by ſome writers as the very eſſence of female virtue.

" God is thy law—thou mine; to know no more,
" Is woman's happieſt knowledge, and her praiſe."

So ſaid Milton: but ſo ſaid not an higher authority than Milton, when in emphatic language he commended the " better part" taken by Mary, who, not contented with hearing the words of truth and wiſdom at ſecond hand, gave her whole ſoul to the attentive conſideration of the Divine doctrines it was her happineſs to hear delivered. According to the common prejudices of ſociety, the praiſe was Martha's due. Her attention was ſolely directed to the objects within her *proper ſphere*. Enough for her to hear the heads of her Divine Maſter's diſcourſe related by her brother, on whoſe better judgment ſhe migh t implicitly rely for explanation of all that it was neceſſary for her to believe or practiſe. And ſo certain was ſhe of acting with propriety, that, confident of her own ſuperior merit, ſhe did not ſcruple to appeal to our Lord upon what ſhe thought the faulty conduct

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of her ſiſter. The rebuke ſhe received eſtabliſhes it not only as a privilege, but as a duty, in the ſex, to hear, to enquire, and to judge for themſelves. The contrary is evidently Anti-Chriſtian doctrine: and, like all others of the ſame ſtamp, is found by experience to be repugnant to the principles of common ſenſe.

To the being who is taught to receive all opinions from authority, judgment is an uſeleſs gift. In ſuch beings, therefore, judgment will lie for ever dormant; and without judgment, how is ſhe to chooſe the authorities that are to be her guide? If her early aſſociations of good and evil have been erroneous, they muſt remain erroneous for ever: for it is by theſe aſſociations that her choice of authorities will be directed. If the cleareſt, the moſt momentous truth be delivered from a quarter, againſt which ſhe has been prejudiced, the truth is contemned as falſhood. If the moſt flagrant and fatal error has been embraced

embraced by the authority ſhe eſteems, ſhe receives it "as truth of holy writ."

While by the habits of ſociety women were confined to the narrow circle of domeſtic life, they received an education, which, if it did not tend to cultivate the judgment in any great degree, introduced thoſe aſſociations which made their reſting upon authority innocent at leaſt, if not ſalutary. To the character of a notable houſewife, an extraordinary needle-woman, and a careful mother, they attached ideas of reſpectability and praiſe. Their theological, their political, and even their moral opinions they received from their natural or ghoſtly fathers, "nothing doubting;" and as their attention was ſolely occupied in the narrow ſphere of their perceptive faculties, it is not to be ſuppoſed that they troubled themſelves with much enquiry. If the higher powers of the mind were not called forth; the firſt and moſt eſſential faculties were ſo cultivated as to produce that

that equality which is always favourable to the production of common ſenſe; and in the early cultivation of theſe firſt faculties, a foundation was laid for the perfection of all the higher powers of the mind, wherever a ſuperior degree of mental culture was beſtowed. Of this we have a deciſive proof in the many illuſtrious inſtances of female learning and genius, which adorned the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries.

It was not by means of pretty ſtory-books, abridgements, and beauties of hiſtory, nor yet by ſcraps of poetry ſelected from the beſt authors, that a Lady Jane Gray, or a Lady Anne Aſkew, attained thoſe high accompliſhments, and that intellectual energy, which has rendered them the admiration of ſucceeding ages.

The early education of thoſe celebrated examples of female wiſdom and virtue was, probably, in many reſpects, the ſame as their contemporaries. Their perceptive faculties were cultivated in infancy by attention,

tion. As a means of cultivating attention, needle-work deſerves a higher place in our eſtimation than it at preſent holds; and the ſpecies of needle-work at that period in vogue was well calculated to anſwer this important end. That the taſte would be improved by contemplating the abſurd and groteſque figures which were then copied, I do not pretend to affirm; but as taſte is the offspring of judgment and imagination, faculties which do not unfold themſelves till after conception has attained ſtrength and vigour, their improvement is the buſineſs of an after-period; whereas *attention*, being abſolutely neceſſary towards the exerciſe of the firſt and moſt eſſential powers of the mind, cannot be too ſoon or too aſſiduouſly cultivated. And how can the power of attention be more effectually called forth, than in copying minute objects, where every thread muſt be counted with the moſt ſcrupulous exactneſs, where every colour muſt be matched with the moſt critical ſkill?

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We view with contempt the taſteleſs labours of our great grandmothers; but let us remember, that in working the little gold-coloured dog, which was, perhaps, placed beſide a ſtrawberry of ſix times his dimenſions, and in labouring the feathers of the ſhapeleſs peacock, which ſtood up like "quills upon the fretful porcupine," habits of attention and of application were acquired, which were of no ſmall uſe in the culture of all the ſuperior faculties. Had the originals from which they copied been more true to nature, ſtill greater advantages would undoubtedly have accrued from this exerciſe of attention; but whatever calls this power into exerciſe in early life, muſt be eſſentially uſeful to the human mind. In this reſpect the above-mentioned ſpecies of needle-work, ridiculous as it may appear, had a manifeſt advantage over thoſe lighter, though more elegant productions, which require ſo little attention as to be executed almoſt mechanically.

mechanically. Theſe ſeldom fail to produce habits of mental inactivity. They may be employed as ſedatives to ardent minds, but will always be found injurious to the ſlow and torpid.

Another important advantage, peculiar to the high-born females of former times, was derived from thoſe aſſociations of which I have already taken notice. Ideas of glory were not then attached to every ſpecies of ſingularity that can be atchieved by impudence or folly. They were connected with ſelf-approbation, and the eſteem of the worthy and the wiſe. An attention to domeſtic duties was then deemed honourable, an aſſociation which no attainment in the walks of literature could diſſolve; it maintained its aſcendancy in the minds of the learned, and was a lamp to the path of the illiterate.

Another great advantage theſe ladies enjoyed, in the very limited number of books they had it in their power to read. This

This circumſtance produced ſuch frequent and attentive peruſal of the few good authors they poſſeſſed, that they became miſtreſſes of every ſubject on which they treated. Inſtead of confuſed and imperfect notions of the author's meaning, their conceptions were clear and accurate; and where there are clear and accurate conceptions, the judgment will be ſound and vigorous.

In the acquirement of the learned languages theſe ladies had many advantages; the very proceſs gone through in attaining them is favourable to arrangement of ideas, and highly inſtrumental in giving that clear conception of the meaning of words, which is ſo eſſential to every ſpecies of intellectual improvement. By their intimate acquaintance with the poets, the philoſophers, and the orators of antiquity, we find the uſe they made of the key of thoſe treaſures of ancient learning, to which the moderns have been ſo much indebted [redacted] thought.

while poſſeſſed of all this knowledge, we find that the ſtudy of the important doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity occupied the firſt place in their attention. The human mind had then been but lately emancipated from thoſe chains by which the Romiſh church had ſo long held her votaries in ſubjection: upon the points in diſpute it was then the faſhion to exerciſe the judgment; and the many great and vigorous minds which were then produced, plainly ſhew that the judgment is never exerciſed in vain.

A minute inveſtigation into the manner in which theſe ladies performed the relative and domeſtic duties of life, would ſerve to convince us, that it is not by a careful cultivation of all the faculties, by extenſive knowledge, or claſſical learning, that women are in danger of being led from the duties of their proper ſphere. No. It is from the filly vanity which is a conſequence of the partial cultivation of the intellectual

powers,

powers, from false associations, which annex ideas of importance to what is trifling and insignificant, and which connect ideas of glory with the silly admiration of fools and coxcombs—that the mind is effectually perverted. And whence are these false associations derived? By seriously reflecting on the tenor of the ideas which modern education is calculated to produce, the question may be easily resolved!

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

JUDGMENT.

Farther Illustrations on the Method of cultivating this Faculty.—Education of the Lower Orders.—Religious Instruction of the Poor, and of the Rich.

SO much, my dear Friend, remains to be ſaid upon the cultivation of judgment, that I muſt beg leave to give you one other letter upon a ſubject which is deſerving of as many volumes.

We have already ſeen that the faculties of conception and judgment are coeval: that without vigour and accuracy in the former, the latter muſt ever remain imperfect; and that where the latter is uncultivated, the former will be in a great meaſure uſeleſs. Tell a child "that he who "runs ſwifteſt will ſooneſt reach the goal;" to underſtand this, the child muſt have a diſtinct

diſtinct conception of running; he muſt alſo have been able to make compariſons between different degrees of ſwiftneſs, and to conceive a leſſer and greater degree of it, before he can acquieſce in your concluſion; which acquieſcence is the work of judgment. If any of the former ideas are indiſtinct, the judgment will reſt upon your authority; the child may learn to repeat it as a judgment of his own, but it is in reality not his, but yours: whereas, if he has accurate and diſtinct conceptions on the firſt part of the propoſition, the judgment included in the ſecond is inevitable, and may be termed intuitive.

Where children are taught every thing by leſſons, where their perceptive powers are never exerciſed, and their conceptions never cultivated, all their judgments are received from authority. People who are thus educated, are accordingly as little in the habit of forming opinions for themſelves, as of fabricating the clothes they wear.

wear. And as without the aſſiſtance of the mechanic, the artiſan, and the dreſs-maker, they muſt, of neceſſity, go unclothed; ſo without the aſſiſtance of public opinion, would their minds be naked, and deſtitute of principle or ſentiment.

It is upon the preſervation of a juſt balance betwixt the faculties of conception and judgment, that the ſoundneſs of the intellect principally depends. This equality in the cultivation of their mental powers compenſates, in a great meaſure, to the vulgar for the want of that education to which neither their avocations nor circumſtances will permit them to aſpire. With them attention is confined to a narrow ſphere. Their perceptive powers are cultivated but to a certain extent; and this cultivation is entirely under the direction of the imperious miſtreſs, *neceſſity*.

The conceptions are exerciſed in the ſame manner upon few objects, but where the attention is fully given to theſe, they are,

are, as far as they extend, perfect and distinct. So it is with the judgment: its sphere of operation is narrow; but while it moves in that sphere, it is never erroneous. Hence we find much good sense in the observations of the peasantry, while these observations are confined to subjects upon which they have had access to such information, as could give them clear and distinct ideas.

If the above observations are well founded, it follows, that if the education we bestow upon the labouring classes, be of a nature calculated to derange the just proportion of the faculties; to give a partial cultivation to those which are never to be called forth by the business, or the duties, which the individual is destined to fulfil, while those which are in daily and hourly requisition are utterly neglected; we in reality do more harm than good.

Am I, then, of the number of those who deem the blessing of education improper for

for the vulgar? Am I one of thoſe children of pride, who wiſh to ſee the darkneſs of ignorance beſpread the regions of poverty, while I ſit with my compeers elate in Goſhen, and enjoy the light? Heaven forbid!

I honour and applaud the noble efforts that have been made, and that are ſtill making, by many generous minds, to give inſtruction to the children of the poor. Far from wiſhing to reſtrain the zeal of charity, I would do all in my power to increaſe its fervour; but I would wiſh to direct it into ſuch channels as would moſt effectually enrich the ſoil it is the intention of benevolence to cultivate. Happineſs, as far as it is attainable by mortals, conſiſts, I think, in the perfect harmony of the ſoul. All the turbulent and diſſocial paſſions, as diſturbers of this harmony, are inimical to happineſs. The partial cultivation of any one of the intellectual faculties is from the ſame cauſe injurious. The affections that

flow

flow from religious principle, as hope, confidence, love, reverence, gratitude, and joy, are all not only favourable to happineſs, but ſo eſſential to it, that I do not ſcruple to affirm that where they are wanting, happineſs will never be found.

If theſe obſervations upon the nature of happineſs appear juſt, we ought, in our endeavours to promote the happineſs and well-being of the lower claſſes, to keep them in view; if we accept of them as principles, we ſhall be at no loſs how to proceed.

I have already endeavoured to ſhew the early progreſs of the paſſions. In this reſpect the children of the poor and of the rich are pretty much upon a level; they are in truth equally neglected. In early life the children of the villager are as much ruined by fooliſh indulgence as the children of his lord. The aſſociations which beget a tendency to the ſelfiſh and malevolent paſſions, are with equal facility acquired by both, and are effectually counteracted in

neither. The firſt ſtep, therefore, towards the education of the lower orders is, to inſtruct the parents in the duties they owe to their children in early life. Books to this effect ought to be diſtributed; exhortations to be frequently given by the clergy; and rewards beſtowed, by the contributors to ſchools, to thoſe parents whoſe children appear to have reaped moſt benefit from home inſtruction and example.

To undertake the education of a poor man's family is, no doubt, a very good and charitable action; but to put the poor man in a way of educating his family himſelf, is doing infinitely more ſervice to ſociety. (E)

The education of the heart is the work of domeſtic life, and where this preliminary is neglected, all the endeavours of the ſchool-maſter will be fruitleſs. In the religious education of the lower orders, there is ſeldom, I fear, any appeal made to the heart and the affections. The religion of the vulgar

vulgar is therefore, in general, gloomy, ſuperſtitious, and I had almoſt ſaid, ferocious. While all the other intellectual faculties are permitted to remain dormant for want of cultivation, the imagination is rouſed and filled with the darkeſt images. The tendency of this temper is to produce diſtruſt, ſuſpicion, envy, and malevolence; and when ſpiritual pride is added, it brings forth arrogance and preſumption. This is not the religion of JESUS CHRIST. Far other are its fruits; widely oppoſite is its tendency upon the heart!

The firſt view to be given of the Deity to the poor, as well as to the rich, is as the Giver of all Good. The univerſality of his providence and of his protecting care ought to be carefully inſtilled. By repreſenting the Supreme to children as a malignant ſpy and an avenging tyrant, no affections conſonant to the ſpirit of the Goſpel can poſſibly be produced.

Another

Another error in the religious inſtruction of the poor is addreſſing ourſelves to the judgment, where the conceptions have never been ſo far opened as to be adequate to the comprehenſion of the ſimpleſt propoſition, upon any ſubject that is not an object of perception. By doing ſo, we may give religious bigotry, but we ſhall never impart religious knowledge. The conceptions of the vulgar, or of the high-born, will be clear and accurate, exactly in proportion to the pains which have been beſtowed on their cultivation. By one medium only can they, in either caſe, be cultivated; and this is, by attention to the objects of perception.

Where the parents are fooliſh, idle, or profligate, the faculty of attention will never be called forth, or never at leaſt exerciſed on proper objects. To reſcue the children of ſuch parents from the dominion of ignorance and vice, is truly laudable. But where ſuch beings are the objects

jects of our charity, it ought to be our primary endeavour to make up to them for the neglect they have experienced; which muſt inevitably have rendered thoſe faculties defective, upon which every ſpecies of intellectual improvement ultimately depends.

If we proceed upon other principles, and without beſtowing any pains in cultivating the perceptions, the attention, and the conceptions, vainly imagine that by teaching theſe poor children to repeat words, we ſhall ſtrengthen the judgment and improve the heart, we cannot fail to meet with diſappointment. In the proceſs of learning to read, the three firſt faculties are no doubt exerciſed; but if this is the only exerciſe that is given to them, they will reap but little advantage from it: much more would they derive from being made acquainted with the nature and uſe of all the objects within the ſphere of their obſervation. The ſimple mechaniſm employed

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in the manufactures with which they are moſt familiar, ought to be explained to them in terms level to their capacity. The attention ought to be turned to the minute examination of every object with which they are converſant. The leather binding of their books, the paper which forms the leaves, the thread on which theſe leaves are ſtrung, and the characters that are printed on them, may be made inſtrumental in invigorating the conceptions: and I am perſuaded, that habits of attention thus acquired would be found of greater uſe in developing the faculties, than any leſſons which the poor ignorant children could be made to read, or get by heart. They ought ſoon to be made ſenſible, that all the comforts of human life are the effects of induſtry, that every article of food or clothing is the product of the labour of many individuals. The co-operation of Divine Providence, without which the labour of man would in many caſes be obvi-

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ouſly ineffectual, ought to be diſplayed in the cleareſt light; to this end ſuch examinations as the following, would be highly ſalutary:—

"What are you going to eat for your "breakfaſt?" 'Bread.' "Who gives "you this bread? Your father; but how "does your father come by the money "which buys it?" 'He earns it by la-'bour.' "But if he were ſick, could he "thus earn it? By whom is his health "preſerved? Who makes the bread? "What is it made from? Can the farmer "cauſe the wheat to grow? Were the far-"mer to be idle, and not to ſow his land, "would God Almighty exert his power "to raiſe him a crop? You then ſee that "the bread you eat, is the bleſſing of Pro-"vidence upon induſtry."

We have already ſeen that clear and diſtinct conceptions are neceſſary towards even the loweſt degree of judgment; but there may be conceptions without judgment,

ment, as there are conceptions without belief. I may conceive the figure of a a horſe with wings, though I do not believe that ſuch a creature ever exiſted. Theſe are not the conceptions on which the minds of children ought to be exerciſed. They ought to be made to form clear conceptions on the objects of ſenſe, and on theſe, alſo, ought the judgment to be exerciſed, before it is made to pronounce on the truth or falſhood of propoſitions that are abſtract, and on which their minds muſt conſequently be deſtitute of all ideas of compariſon.

Habits of attention to the objects of perception are ſo eſſentially neceſſary to thoſe who are by their ſituation deſtined to be conſtantly employed upon ſenſible objects, that we may aſſure ourſelves, when by the education we give to the poor, we incapacitate them for this attention, we do an injury, where we intended to confer a favour.

This

This point deſerves attentive conſideration. I could adduce many proofs in ſupport of my opinion concerning it; and make no doubt that many ladies, as well as myſelf, have experienced diſappointment, in the hopes they had formed of making excellent ſervants by means of an education above the vulgar.

After having inſpired a taſte for reading, and excited the powers of the imagination, while attention to the cultivation of the objects of perception has been totally omitted, we are ſurprized to find that the proper buſineſs of the ſervant is neglected. After the moſt careful cultivation of the reaſoning faculties, we are vexed by inſtances of deficiency in common judgment; and after the moſt ſerious pains to impreſs religious truths and moral ſentiments upon the mind, by means of leſſons and lectures, we are ſometimes pained by diſcovering proofs of irreligion and immorality.

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The cauſe of this diſappointment we may, in many inſtances, trace to that partial cultivation of the faculties, which, while it ripened thoſe leaſt uſeful to the poſſeſſor, left the firſt and moſt eſſential powers of the mind in a manner dormant. Happier conſequences would, I am perſuaded enſue, if, in the education of perſons to whom habits of active induſtry are eſſential, we made it our endeavour to guard againſt affording *ſtimuli* to the imagination. Inſtead of doing ſo, we ought to improve the powers of perception; to rouſe attention; to lead the mind to form clear conceptions upon the common objects and common affairs of life; and upon theſe alſo, to exerciſe the judgment. It is thus only that we can hope to produce that *common ſenſe*, which is ſterling in every region; the current coin that is equally uſeful to the high and to the low, to the learned and to the unlearned. It is ever in requiſition, ever neceſſary; nor can all the

the ſtores of wit and knowledge compenſate for its abſence. As it is in a peculiar manner eſſential to thoſe who are employed in conducting the common concerns of life, the education by which it can be moſt effectually cultivated, is ſurely the beſt which can be given to ſuch as are doomed to move in a narrow ſphere; and where the education we beſtow has not this tendency, it cannot fail to be injurious.

By teaching the poor to read, we put into their hands the moſt powerful inſtrument of improvement to all the intellectual faculties; but if theſe faculties have received no previous culture, we need not expect that they will ever learn to employ this power to any uſeful purpoſe. The queſtion put by the Apoſtle to the Ethiopian, "Underſtandeſt thou what thou read-"eſt?" if put to the children of our charities, might well be anſwered by them in the words of Candace's prime miniſter, "How can I, except ſome man ſhould

"guide

"guide me? Is it by teaching children to repeat ſtrings of judgments upon abſtract propoſitions, which they have no faculties to apprehend, that we expect to give them that underſtanding of the Scriptures which ſhall make them wiſe unto ſalvation? Theſe judgments may be repeated as diſtinctly as poſſible, but it is impoſſible they ſhould be believed; becauſe *where there is no conception, there can be no belief.* The conceptions muſt be cultivated, in order to render religious inſtruction (what by proper care it will not fail to be) the means of improving the judgment, elevating the ſentiments, and purifying the heart.

In the infancy of the human race, the ALMIGHTY PARENT vouchſafed to be the inſtructor of mankind. Of what nature were the revelations of the Divine will which were made to the firſt ages? Were they upon abſtruſe points of doctrine? No: the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of GOD, manifeſted throughout the works of creation,

ation, afforded an everlaſting theme to the inſpired writers of the Old Teſtament.

The poetry of the Hebrews is a continual hymn of praiſe to the Great Creator. The Supreme Being is there repreſented as the animating ſoul of nature. All his works praiſe him; ſun, moon, and ſtars, ſhew forth his glory. His ſuperintending providence is traced throughout all events from generation to generation; and his ſuperintending care is repreſented as extending to the wild beaſts of the foreſt, and to the fowls of the heavens!

At moſt ſchools for the poor, the children are taught to read in the Old Teſtament. But are they taught there to read the important leſſons I have above deſcribed? Alas! no. Their conceptions are never ſo far opened as to permit theſe deſcriptions to excite any emotions in the heart. Theſe emotions are the leſs likely to be excited, from not being in uniſon with the only conceptions of the Deity which have

have been obtained. Theſe have been awful and terrific, little calculated to excite the feelings of admiration and gratitude; nor does the way in which they read the Bible tend to give any ideas upon the ſubject to the mind.

I once paid a viſit to a country ſchool, where the children were taught, as uſual, to read upon the Bible. The miſtreſs, good woman! piqued herſelf upon the knowledge of the ſtops, which, as ſhe very juſtly obſerved, were in general too little attended to at ſchools of the ſame deſcription. To ſhew the proficiency of her ſcholars, one of the beſt readers was called up. The poor child, taking in its breath, and exalting its voice to the higheſt pitch, began to ſcream out ſome verſes in Exodus, repeating every ſtop aloud with great emphaſis, till happily it concluded with a twang at per-i-o-d. I at that time laughed heartily at the ridiculous exhibition, but have ſince viewed this abuſe of the ſacred writings in a more ſerious light.

As

As we do not profeſs to have one religion for the poor, and another for the rich, whatever upon this ſubject applies to one claſs, applies to all. It was the emphatic deſcription given by our Saviour to prove his divine miſſion, that *to the poor the Gospel was preached;* and *by* the poor it was ordained, in the wiſdom of Providence, that the glad tidings of ſalvation ſhould be firſt diſpenſed throughout the world.

Before *our* religion the diſtinctions formed by human pride vaniſh; in *its* preſence worldly pomp and worldly honours are annihilated. Stript of his adventitious greatneſs, Man appears as he is: whatever be his ſtation, the frail child of duſt!—however humble his lot, the heir of immortality!

While all thoſe ideas of equality, which philoſophical or intereſted ſpeculatiſts have endeavoured to eſtabliſh, tend to inſpire hatred, envy, pride, and diſcontent; the equality taught by the Goſpel inſpires the pureſt benevolence. It teaches humility

to

to the rich, and contentment to the poor; and fraterniſes (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf) the human race.

The opinions I have advanced upon the cultivation of the faculties, receive no ſlight ſupport from the conſideration, that the knowledge of the Scriptures, I mean a true practical knowledge of them, requires not thoſe higher powers of the mind, which muſt be brought to ſome degree of perfection before a knowledge of the abſtract ſciences can be attained. The conceptions muſt, indeed, have been ſo far exerciſed, as to give clear and juſt ideas; but the ideas need not be numerous; and in reading the Old Teſtament, aſſiſtance is given to the mind in forming them, by a perpetual reference to the objects of perception. If the Bible is, however, read merely as an exerciſe in the art of reading, no ideas are to be expected from it. But if it is referred to, as the repoſitory of all uſeful knowledge; if it is made uſe of to awaken the affections,

affections, and to call forth the beſt feelings of the heart, it will be rendered an effectual mean of improving the conceptions, and enlightening the judgment. The hiſtory of the creation, and of all the events antecedent to the diſpenſation of the Moſaic law, are recorded in terms of ſuch beautiful ſimplicity, that they are calculated to make a ſtrong impreſſion upon the minds of children. To make this impreſſion uſeful, it is not ſufficient that the facts are known, nor that the firmeſt belief in their reality be eſtabliſhed in the mind. It is the providence of God which animates the ſcene. Confidence or faith in this providence is repreſented as forming the virtue of the Patriarchs; it is this by which they are diſtinguiſhed from the ſavages of other ages, and of other nations. The knowledge of the true God was the inheritance of the Hebrews; it breathes in every line of their ſacred writings; elevating the conceptions to a pitch of ſublimity beyond

what mere learning or genius has ever yet attained. The idea of the Supreme, as the Father and Preſerver, not only of the human race, but of the brute creation, is calculated to inſpire feelings of compaſſion, mingled with devotional ſentiment; and ought particularly to be dwelt upon to thoſe, who from their ſituation in life, have it in their power to exerciſe humanity, or the contrary, upon the inferior animals. The cruelty that we ſee daily exerciſed upon brutes is ſhocking to every feeling heart; and were leſſons upon this ſubject enforced, as they may be, by the authority of ſcriptures, to be given at our charity-ſchools, it would be of ſervice to humanity.

When the affections have been thus awakened, and the powers of conception and judgment in ſome degree opened, the hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation will not only gratify curioſity, but excite ſurprize, wonder, and, it may be, ſome degree of indignation and diſcontent. Why was this people,

ple, weak and wicked as they are by their own prophets deſcribed to be, the choſen people of GOD? Children, who by a more liberal education have had the ſphere of their knowledge enlarged, are ſtill more apt to indulge in theſe anxious doubts, which, if ſilenced by the voice of authority, may end in total ſcepticiſm. The vulgar, taking every thing literally, are apt to fall into an error no leſs fatal; and to conceive, that vices which were committed by the *people of* GOD, cannot be conſidered as unpardonable offences.

It is, therefore, of great importance, to make it plain to young people, as ſoon as we perceive theſe doubts to have a place in their minds, that the deſcendants of Abraham were not choſen by GOD, to ſet forth to the world an example of pure and heroic virtue. They were ſeparated from the reſt of mankind by peculiar laws and ceremonies, in order to preſerve the knowledge of the *one only* and *true* GOD; and

divided

divided into tribes, who each preſerved an accurate account of its genealogy from him in whom it was promiſed "that in his "ſeed ſhould all the nations of the earth be "bleſſed," in order to prove the accompliſhpliſhment of that promiſe in the birth of the Meſſiah. The immoral conduct of the people thus highly favoured with ſuperior light ſhewed, in the ſtrongeſt colours, the neceſſity of a revelation yet more perfect than had been granted to the fathers. To faith in the directing and protecting providence of GOD, was to be added a faith ſtill more powerful and efficaci ous.

Thus may children be led by degrees to a knowledge of the New Teſtament diſpenſation.

While the ſcriptures are thus opened to them, they will, like the diſciples on their journey to Emmaus, find their hearts burn within them. The hiſtory of their Redeemer's life and ſufferings, of his meritorious death, and glorious aſcenſion, will awaken

awaken each amiable affection, each intereſting feeling of the heart. They will ſee, that as protecting Providence was the boon promiſed to the believers in the firſt revelation, Divine Grace is the peculiar promiſe of the ſecond. They will perceive, that by iniquity and impenitence both may be forfeited; and thus the neceſſity of a ſtrict adherence to the moral duties will be made clear and evident, and piety and morality be ſo ſtrongly aſſociated in their minds, as to prevent a tendency to ſuperſtition on the one hand, and to enthuſiaſm on the other. For this profitable knowledge of the ſcriptures, neither genius, nor learning, nor abſtract reaſoning, are neceſſary. The deductions from the firſt principle of a Supreme Being, eternal, wiſe, and good, are a ſeries of ſelf-evident propoſitions, which require only a moderate power of conception and ſtrength of judgment to comprehend. Cultivated imagination is here of no uſe; and in reading the ſcriptures,

ſincerity

ſincerity and ſimplicity of heart are more eſſential requiſites than all the critic's lore.

Among thoſe who have ſtudied the ſcriptures as critics, and who, in reading the ſacred writings, have entirely applied themſelves to the diſcovery of recondite knowledge, endeavouring in each obſcure paſſage to find a ſupport to ſome previouſly adopted ſyſtem, I have found many who are declared enemies to affording ſcriptural inſtruction to the poor; many who think that the Bible ought by no means to be put into the hands of youth: but never did I meet with one who had been taught to apply its precepts and its doctrines *to the heart*, that harboured any apprehenſion of the conſequences of giving ſcriptural knowledge to the otherwiſe illiterate. It is this application of the ſacred writings which it ought to be the inſtructor's aim to teach. If, inſtead of this ſalutary application of the divine commandments, we go about to eſtabliſh our own righteouſneſs,

ouſneſs, by interpreting the judgments denounced againſt ſin into the condemnation of thoſe who differ from us in opinion, we ſhall, indeed, reap little advantage from ſcripture knowledge. Comments of this nature, are, I am afraid, but too common: and as they are the natural reſult of a partial application of particular paſſages, they can only be prevented, by leading the mind to ſeek for the *general meaning* in the *general ſpirit* of the Goſpel writers; which, if done with ſincerity, will always bring ſome ſalutary truth home to the boſom. Striking are the leſſons that are given upon this head by our bleſſed Lord. Let us labour to impreſs them in ſuch a manner as to render the reading of the ſcriptures "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs."

It is in order to effect this application of the doctrines and precepts of the Goſpel to the heart, that I would gradually prepare the heart for their reception. I have,

as

as I am informed, given umbrage to ſome pious minds by what I advanced upon this ſubject in the former volume. This information has induced me ſcrupulouſly to re-examine all the arguments upon which my opinion was formed; with a firm reſolution of freely acknowledging error, wherever I found it. No arguments, indeed, were offered by thoſe who differed from me, to aſſiſt me in this reſearch. By theſe I might, perhaps, have been more effectually enlightened; but I confeſs, that after having given all the attention to the ſubject of which I am capable, I ſtill remain of opinion, *that where there are no conceptions, there can be no belief*; and that to force articles of belief upon the mind, before the conceptions have been ſo far opened as to afford the poſſible exerciſe of judgment, (the faculty by which we alone determine on the truth or falſhood of propoſitions) can have no other conſequence, than to produce either a blind and bigoted adherence

rence to unexamined principles, a total indifference to all principle, or the extremes of ſcepticiſm and infidelity.

Greatly have they miſtaken me, who imagine that it is from a light eſtimation of the peculiar doctrines of chriſtianity, that I am led to diſapprove of the means which are ſometimes taken to enforce them upon the infant mind. It is my reſpect for theſe doctrines, my opinion of their importance, and my conviction of their being found conſonant to truth and reaſon, which leads me to recommend with earneſtneſs, that they may be ſo enforced as that the heart and the underſtanding may be equally impreſſed with their truth. In this all ranks of ſociety are alike concerned; and it is therefore my opinion, that the religious education of the poor and of the rich ought to be conducted upon the ſame principles. By cultivating the affections of the infant heart, and inſpiring towards the great Creator feelings of gratitude, reverence, hope, confidence,

confidence, and love, the conceptions will be opened towards the perception of moral truth; the judgment will thus be exerciſed, and when it is ſufficiently matured to perceive the importance of the doctrines of the Goſpel, then, and then only, will they be received and cheriſhed ſo as to yield the fruits of faith and righteouſneſs.

The period when this degree of maturity takes place, it muſt be left to the preceptor to determine. I ſhould, however, by all means recommend, that the fundamental principles of religion and morality be deeply impreſſed upon the mind before imagination begins to predominate.

When the judgment has been previouſly ſtrengthened by religious principle, imagination will ever afterwards ſubmit to the control of reaſon; but if we permit imagination to take the lead, the religious principles and opinions of our pupils will receive from this faculty ſuch a colouring, as may have very fatal conſequences. Superſtition

perſtition and enthuſiaſm are the Scylla and Charibdis of ſound and rational piety. In order to avoid the former, care muſt be taken to watch over thoſe early aſſociations which connect ideas of good and evil with circumſtances which are trivial or indifferent; and to preſerve from the latter, Imagination muſt be put under the regulation of Judgment. Adieu.

LETTER X.

Imagination and Taste.

Imagination defined.—Necessity of its Operations being guided by Judgment.—Illustrations.—Definition of Taste.—Mistakes concerning the Cultivation of this Faculty. Union of Conception and Judgment essential to its Cultivation.—Illustrations.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE neceſſity I feel myſelf under of compreſſing into the limits of a ſingle Letter the obſervations that occur to me on the ſubjects of Imagination and Taſte, will compel me to be conciſe; I ſhall, however, endeavour to be as little obſcure as poſſible.

The word Imagination has great latitude in its application. It is ſometimes employed to denote ſimple apprehenſion; it being

being very uſual in common converſation to ſay, that we cannot imagine how ſuch a thing could happen, when we mean, that we cannot conceive it. In this ſenſe, you will obſerve, that I have carefully avoided employing it. It is ſometimes likewiſe applied in a general way, to expreſs the operation of the mind in thinking; and in this incorrect way of ſpeaking, we frequently obſerve, that a thing occupies the imagination, when, in reality, it is the ſubject of reflection.

Again; the term Imagination is ſometimes made uſe of in deſcribing the intellectual pleaſures and purſuits, in contra-diſtinction to thoſe of ſenſe. In this way it is applied by Doctor Akenſide, whoſe poem on the Pleaſures of the Imagination deſcribes the employment of all the intellectual faculties.

By Imagination, in the ſenſe to which I have confined myſelf, is underſtood that power of the mind, which is exerted in forming

forming new combinations of ideas. The power of calling up at pleaſure any particular claſs of ideas is properly denominated Fancy. A creative imagination implies not only the power of fancy, but judgment, abſtraction, and taſte. Where theſe are wanting, the flights of imagination are little better than the ravings of a lunatic.

From the nature of this faculty, it is obvious, that it can be exerciſed but in a very ſlight degree in childhood, the ideas being at that period too few in number to afford materials for new combinations; or ſhould the attempt at forming them be made, they muſt, from the want of taſte and judgment, be weak and imperfect. But long before the mind can combine for itſelf, the conceptions are ſufficiently vigorous to enter with avidity into the combinations made by others. If theſe are ſo artfully contrived as to intereſt the paſſions, or to excite the emotions of terror, hope, indignation, or ſympathy, they become the

moſt

moſt pleaſing exerciſes of the juvenile mind; but if this exerciſe be frequently repeated, it will infallibly produce trains of thought, highly unfavourable to the cultivation of thoſe important faculties, without whoſe aid the creative power of imagination can never be exerted to any uſeful purpoſe.

While the mind is occupied in making obſervations on the nature and properties of the objects of ſenſe, its train of thought is merely a ſeries of ſimple conceptions; but theſe conceptions are the materials with which imagination is at a proper time to work. On theſe conceptions, too, does judgment begin its operations; by theſe, is it exerciſed into ſtrength; and by ſuch exerciſe alone it is, that it can ever attain perfection. Theſe operations are, as I ſuſpect, greatly retarded, and in ſome inſtances utterly prevented, by a premature diſpoſition to make attempts at combination; the inevitable conſequence of having the

the mind powerfully impreſſed by intereſting fictions. After every ſuch impreſſion the train of thought flows for a conſiderable time in the ſame channel with the emotion that has been excited: and before judgment has attained the capability of directing its combinations, the images that are formed muſt of neceſſity be wild and incoherent. However incoherent they may be, they have ſuch a tendency to increaſe the flow of ideas, and, of conſequence, to augment vivacity, that ſuch children appear to much greater advantage, than thoſe whoſe faculties are cultivated in the natural order. But when both arrive at maturity, they who have laid in the greateſt fund of clear, diſtinct, and accurate ideas, muſt poſſeſs a manifeſt advantage.

Were imagination, (as is unfortunately too often ſuppoſed) a ſimple faculty, which could be exerciſed to advantage, without the aſſiſtance of the other faculties, the methods uſually taken to cultivate it would be

be judicious and effectual. But if it be in fact a compound of ſeveral other faculties, it neceſſarily follows, that its excellence depends on the degree of perfection, to which the faculties connected with it have arrived. The Iliad of Homer is a work of imagination; it exhibits a ſeries of combinations, perhaps more aſtoniſhing in their variety, harmony, and conſiſtency, than any that human genius has ever produced; but does it not in every line give a proof of clear and vigorous conceptions, of ſtrong judgment, and profound reflection? When our own Shakeſpeare, whoſe elevated genius

"Exhauſted worlds, and then imagin'd new,"

pourtrayed the character of Caliban, (who is certainly a creature of the poet's imagination) did not judgment evidently guide the pencil, and lay on the colours? From the incomparable productions of theſe extraordinary men, we may juſtly infer,

that all the faculties of the mind were by them poſſeſſed in an uncommon degree of vigour, and therefore conclude them to have been cultivated according to the order aſſigned by nature.

In a living author, whoſe remote ſituation will apologize for a compariſon which would otherwiſe ſeem invidious, we ſee a ſtill further proof of our argument. In the power of imagination, (taken according to its ſimple definition) it is probable, that Kotzebue does not yield to either of the poets above-mentioned. But what are the combinations which his genius has produced? I have no intention of turning critic, and therefore ſhall decline anſwering the queſtion; but think it not out of my province to obſerve, that if a deficiency in the powers of accurate conception and ſound judgment are laid to his charge, he has given us a clue to lead to the cauſe of this deficiency in his memoirs, where he deſcribes his mother having, while he was

yet

yet a child, aſſiduouſly cultivated his imagination by the powerful emotions excited by romantic fiction. He tells us, "ſhe "was a woman of ſenſibility, and de- "lighted in inſpiring him with a taſte for "works of imagination, of which he ſoon "grew enthuſiaſtically fond." Of old Mrs. Shakeſpeare we know nothing; but from the ſound judgment exhibited in the works of her ſon, I think the probability is, that inſtead of being a woman of *ſenſibility*, (in the ſenſe Kotzebue imploys the term) ſhe was a woman of plain good ſenſe.

To produce a work of genius, the power of imagination muſt be poſſeſſed in a very eminent degree; but unleſs a certain portion of the ſame imagination be poſſeſſed by the reader, the works of genius will never be peruſed with delight. Nothing can be reliſhed but in proportion as it is underſtood; and thoroughly to underſtand an author, we muſt be able, with the rapidity of thought, to enter into all his aſſociations. This can never

never be done by thoſe who poſſeſs a very limited ſtock of ideas. The beautiful alluſions which at once illuſtrate and adorn the works of the learned, are loſt upon thoſe who are unacquainted with claſſical literature; and we may be aſſured, that many of the beauties of the ancient orators and poets, are in like manner loſt upon the learned of our days, from their ignorance of the aſſociations which produced them. A ſmall number of ideas will, indeed, ſuffice to purſue a ſimple narrative; and according we find that narrative, either of real or fictitious events, is the only ſort of reading which is reliſhed by the uncultivated mind. Do we wiſh to inſpire a taſte for ſtudies of a higher order? Then let us lay a ſolid foundation for ſuch a taſte, in the cultivation of all thoſe faculties which are neceſſary to the proper exerciſe of imagination. Let us by the exerciſe of the reaſoning powers, as well as of the conception and the judgment, produce

that

that arrangement in the ideas, which is alike favourable to invention and to action. In ſuch minds the trains of aſſociated ideas are, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, harmonized by truth. The ideas being numerous, diſtinct, and juſt, are called up in proper order; and as arrangement in our aſſociations is the true key of memory, every idea that is wanted obeys the call of will. It is then that the power of imagination comes forth to irradiate the mind, and to give a new zeſt to the charm of exiſtence. The combinations which it then preſents, arranged by judgment, ſelected by taſte, and elevated by the ſublime ideas of Divine perfection, give an exerciſe to all the intellectual powers.

"What employment can *he* have wor-
"thy of a man whoſe imagination is occu-
"pied only about things *low* and *baſe*, and
"grovels in a narrow field of mean, una-
"nimating, and unintereſting objects?" and ſuch muſt ever be the caſe with him whoſe ideas are few, confuſed, and inaccurate;

and

and who, while incapable of expanding his mind to embrace the forms of general and abſtract truth, has habitually employed his imagination on the chimeras of untutored fancy; ſuch a perſon muſt be " inſen-
" ſible to thoſe finer and more delicate ſenti-
" ments, and blind to thoſe more enlarged
" and nobler views, which elevate the ſoul,
" and make it conſcious of its dignity.

" How different from him, whoſe imagi-
" nation, like an eagle in her flight, takes
" a wide proſpect, *and obſerves whatever*
" *it preſents*, that is new or beautiful, grand
" or important; whoſe rapid wing varies
" the ſcene every moment, carrying him
" through the fairy regions of wit or fan-
" cy, ſometimes through the more regular
" and ſober walks of ſcience and philoſophy.
" The various objects which he ſurveys,
" according to their different degrees of
" beauty and dignity, raiſe in him the live-
" ly and agreeable emotions of taſte. Il-
" luſtrious human characters as they paſs
" in

" in review, clothed with their moral qua-
" lities, touch his heart ſtill more deeply.
" They not only awaken the ſenſe of beau-
" ty, but excite the ſentiment of approba-
" tion, and kindle the glow of virtue.
" While he views what is truly great and
" glorious in human conduct, his ſoul
" catches the divine flame, and burns with
" deſire to emulate what it admires."*

The reveries of ſuch a mind are not only delightfully amuſing, but ſalutary and uſeful. On the gay pictures delineated by fancy judgment, reaſon, and the moral ſenſe, exert their powers of criticiſm; and thus the caſual combinations of imagination are made a means of improvement to the heart.

I have known a young perſon, prone to indulge in the reveries preſented by a rich and lively imagination, who acknowledged that it was by reflecting on theſe ſpontaneous effuſions of fancy, that ſhe became ac-

* Reid.

quainted

quainted with the propenſities and imperfections of her own temper and diſpoſition. In her dreams of future felicity, ſhe found that the gratification of vanity was always included, or indeed formed the ground-work of the piece; ſhe accordingly ſet herſelf to root out a propenſity which ſhe thus diſcovered to be predominant. When mortified by the pride of others, ſhe found fancy immediately buſied in forming ſcenes whereon ſhe was to act the ſuperior part, and to retort the mortification on thoſe by whom her feelings had been wounded. Conſcience took the alarm, and taught her to apply to the Throne of Grace for the chriſtian ſpirit of true humility. Thus was imagination rendered ſubſervient to religion, judgment, and reaſon; and while it acts under ſuch control, we may ſafely pronounce it the firſt of human bleſſings!

Where the imagination has been injudiciouſly ſtimulated at an early period, it has little chance of ever coming under this

ſpecies

ſpecies of regulation. The attention having been habitually engaged in purſuing the dreams of fiction, loſes a thouſand opportunities of information and improvement, and the number of ideas muſt conſequently be extremely circumſcribed. The judgment having never been exerciſed on realities, can only compare ideas that are equally imperfect, and conſequently be for ever liable to error. An expectation that the ſame cauſes ſhould always produce ſimilar effects, will, to the mind which has been exerciſed in fiction, be attended with the moſt fatal conſequences; the real events of life ſucceeding each other in a very different train from that in which they are repreſented in ſuch productions. The falſe aſſociations that are thus produced in the mind, may not only miſlead the judgment, but, as I have endeavoured elſewhere to ſhew, may effectually pervert the heart —the ſenſibility excited by fictitious repreſentations of human miſery being very

far

far from that genuine ſpirit of benevolence that is actively exerted in alleviating the diſtreſſes which it cannot remove. Where the judgment has been ſtrengthened by obſervation, and habits of active benevolence have been, in ſome meaſure, acquired, and confirmed by religious principle, then, indeed, the luxurious tear, called forth by the witching power of imagination, may be indulged with ſafety; for its ſource will not then be miſtaken. But where by imagination ſenſibility has been brought into exiſtence, to the woes of imagination will ſenſibility be confined; and far too ſickly will be its conſtitution, to produce the active charities of life.

Taste is ſo intimately connected with imagination, that many of the obſervations applicable to the one will be found to reach the other. The emotion of taſte, though ſimple in its operation, is derived from complex ſources. Its very exiſtence depends on the vigour of conception, and implies

implies the exercise of judgment. Nor are these faculties alone equal to the production of this delightful emotion; as we may be convinced, by observing the numbers of persons who possess these faculties in an eminent degree, who, nevertheless, are incapable of experiencing the emotions of taste. Without a certain portion of sensibility, I believe, true taste is never found. How much this sensibility depends upon organization, I cannot presume to determine; but that it is seldom the boon of uncultivated minds, experience affords us convincing proofs.

To perceive and to enjoy whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature or of art, is the peculiar privilege of taste. Its emotions are accordingly divided by an author,* to whose elegant and judicious remarks I confess many obligations, into the *emotions of sublimity*, and *the emotions of beauty*."

* See Alison on Taste.

"The

" The qualities that produce theſe emo-
" tions, are to be found in almoſt every
" claſs of the objects of human knowledge,
" and the emotions themſelves afford one
" of the moſt extenſive ſources of human
" delight. They occur to us amid every
" variety of external ſcenery, and among
" many diverſities of diſpoſition and affec-
" tion in the mind of man. The moſt plea-
" ſing arts of human invention are altogether
" directed to their purſuit; and even the
" neceſſary arts are exalted into dignity by
" the genius that can unite beauty with uſe."

That a ſuſceptibility to the emotion of taſte does not altogether depend upon the original frame of our nature, is evident from its being entirely confined to minds poſſeſſing a certain degree of cultivation; whereas the emotions of ſurpriſe, joy, wonder, &c. are felt by all. Nor is the mind of the moſt cultivated at all times equally ſuſceptible of theſe emotions. All muſt know, that there are moments when

objects

objects of ſublimity or beauty make no impreſſion. All muſt have experienced, that ſcenes which have at one period called forth the moſt vivid ſenſations of delight, have at another been viewed with the moſt perfect indifference.

The more deeply we examine this curious ſubject, the more fully ſhall we be convinced, that the emotions of taſte entirely depend on the train of ideas which are called up in the mind by certain objects of perception. If the mind has not been previouſly furniſhed with a ſtore of ideas that can be thus aſſociated, the fineſt objects of ſublimity or beauty will never give a pleaſurable ſenſation to the breaſt. They may be viewed with wonder, with admiration, but will never produce emotions of ſublimity or beauty.

The above obſervations may be further illuſtrated, by reflecting on the manner in which a taſte for the beauties of nature in the material world, and for the beauties

of

of poetry, enhance each other. A young mind, accuſtomed to the contemplation of rural ſcenery, is enraptured by the poetical deſcriptions which preſent a tranſcript of all that had ſo often charmed the imagination.

"When Nature charms, for life itſelf is new."

The elevated ſentiments and ſublime ideas of the poet give, on the other hand, a number of new aſſociations, which are henceforth called up by the ſcenes of nature, and become to the mind of ſenſibility a new and inexhauſtible ſource of delight.

By the ideas aſſociated with them, a thouſand ſounds that are in themſelves indifferent, nay, ſome that are rather in their natures diſagreeable, become pregnant with delight. I have for this laſt half-hour been leaning on my elbow, liſtening to the diſtant tinkling of the ſheep-bell, a ſound ſo perfectly in uniſon with the ſurrounding ſcenery, as to appear enchantingly beautiful. Upon reflection, I believe it to be juſt ſuch a bell as is tied to the pie-man's baſket,

baſket, which I have often in town deemed an execrable nuiſance. The different emotions which it now excites can only be reſolved into the different trains of ideas with which the ſound is aſſociated.*

My narrow limits will not permit me to go into this ſubject at ſufficient length; but the hints I have ſuggeſted, will, if purſued with any attention, infallibly lead us to conclude, that the foundation of the emotions of taſte, with regard to natural objects and to poetical deſcription, muſt be laid in diſtinct

* I once knew a lady who had been brought up in one of the moſt confined ſtreets of the city of London, where her father had, by dint of induſtry, accumulated a large fortune. When complaining of her hard fate, in being obliged upon her marriage to leave the metropolis, for the dull ſameneſs of a country life, ſhe drew a ſtriking picture of the joys ſhe had unwillingly relinquiſhed. "*There*, (ſhe ſaid) ſhe never knew what "it was to be lonely; for beſides the buſtle all day long "in the ſtreet of carts and coaches, there were forty "coopers in the back-yard, who were knock, knock-"ing, from morning till night! Does not this ſtrongly evince the power of aſſociation in forming our ideas of harmony?

and

and accurate conceptions. By theſe muſt the ideas be accumulated, which, by the laws of aſſociation, are formed into diſtinct trains; which, like the genii of Adelin's lamp, appear the moment the enchanter imagination is diſpoſed to call them. Without ſome pains taken in the cultivation of the faculty of conception, we may learn to criticize upon the laws of taſte, but we ſhall never be ſubject to its influence.

In creating a ſuſceptibility to the emotions of taſte, we ſhall find a powerful aſſiſtant in devotional ſentiment. The mind that has been accuſtomed to aſſociate the ideas of Infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, with all that is ſtriking in the works of nature, muſt have a peculiar tendency to the emotions of ſublimity and beauty. It is thus that ſenſibility may be properly and effectually awakened. The train of thought which devotional ſentiment excites, is ſo highly favourable to the cultivation of refined taſte, that I greatly queſtion, whether

whether its emotions were ever excited, where ſenſibility had not been thus called forth. So neceſſary is it towards the perfection of the human mind, that the cultivation of the affections ſhould go hand in hand with that of intellect!

It is no ſmall incitement to the cultivation of taſte, to reflect, that the emotions of ſublimity and beauty are connected, not only with our devotional, but with our moral feelings. They coaleſce not with any of the diſſocial or malevolent paſſions; and can never be experienced while the mind is under their influence. By rendering the mind ſuſceptible of the emotions of taſte, we not only expand the circle of human pleaſures, but as every emotion, of which the heart is capable, has a tendency to produce emotions that are in the ſame key, we give an additional chord, if I may ſo expreſs it, to the harmony of the virtues.

To thoſe who are by their ſituation in ſociety exempted from the cares and per-

plexities of buſineſs, it is of the laſt importance to have a ſufficient number of ſuch objects and purſuits, as may ſerve fully to occupy the time which is thus left to their diſpoſal. The intellectual powers have little chance of being called forth, in any eminent degree, where there are no difficulties to ſtimulate the energies of the ſoul, and no object to rouze its activity. The love of knowledge is, indeed, an active principle; and for that reaſon, cannot be too aſſiduouſly cultivated in the minds of thoſe who are born to the privilege or the *curſe* of leiſure: but if to the love of knowledge, we do not add a ſuſceptibility to the emotions of taſte, the mind will be apt to languiſh, and to ſeek reſources in thoſe fatal ſcenes of diſſipation, where every virtuous diſpoſition and manly ſentiment are ſoon obliterated.

The emotions of taſte, are, I believe, particularly congenial to the female mind; but it deſerves our ſerious enquiry, how far

far the common mode of female education tends to cultivate, or to deſtroy, this natural ſuſceptibility. When we hear a mother ſpeak of giving her daughters *a taſte for muſic, and a taſte for painting*, we may, nine times in ten, conclude, that ſhe means nothing more by the expreſſion, than exciting in her children an ambition to exhibit to advantage their practical ſkill in theſe accompliſhments. For this purpoſe, the methods generally adopted are obviouſly ſo ſucceſsful, as to render it unneceſſary to ſuggeſt any improvement.

With the idea of excelling in thoſe accompliſhments is aſſociated every idea of glory and approbation. To render the road to excellence eaſy of acceſs, diffidence and modeſty are baniſhed from the youthful mind; the veil of baſhfulneſs is torn aſide by vanity, and every art made uſe of to render the gentle pupil callous to the public gaze. Vanity, aided by example, and ſtimulated by ambition, does wonders.

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The attention is exerted in the art of imitation, and its power is never exerted in vain. Where the beſt models are procured, the copies will in time be excellent. The Muſic-Maſter who has taſte, will teach his pupils to make uſe of graces, which will ſerve as a ſuccedaneum for that which he has it not in his power to confer; and rapid execution muſt inevitably be attained by unwearied application.

All this may, I confeſs, be accompliſhed without the cultivation of a ſingle faculty of the mind, excepting thoſe of perception and attention; but to confound this paltry art of imitation with the idea of TASTE is no leſs abſurd, than if we were to call the compoſitor, who arranges the types for an edition of Homer, the Prince of Poets!

The emotion of Taſte with regard to muſical compoſition, depends upon aſſociation no leſs than it does with regard to the other objects of our perceptions.

Single

Single ſounds, we well know, are accounted agreeable or diſagreeable, according to the ideas which they excite. On examination, we ſhall find that thoſe which particularly ſtrike us as ſublime or beautiful, never fail to produce certain trains of ideas in the mind; which, if accidentally broken, the emotions of ſublimity or beauty are annihilated. An inſtance or two will ſufficiently elucidate this truth. What ſound ſo ſublime as a peal of thunder? The emptying of a cart of ſtones in the ſtreet may be miſtaken for it, and, while the deception laſts, will produce the emotions of ſublimity in their fulleſt extent; but let us diſcover our miſtake, and what becomes of the emotions of ſublimity? The melodious notes of the nightingale have been well imitated on the ſtage; but did they there produce the ſame emotions of beauty, as when heard in the ſtillneſs of the ſolemn grove?

Muſic, which is a continuation of ſounds, may, from the various combinations of which

which it is capable, be rendered highly expreſſive of the tender, the plaintive, the melancholy, the cheerful, or the gay. It may be rendered elevating or depreſſing, ſoothing the ſoul to ſadneſs, or exhilirating to the tone of pleaſure. Now that every one of theſe various emotions are occaſioned by the production of certain trains of ideas connected by the laws of aſſociation, I think no perſon of reflection will diſpute. The perſon who is not ſuſceptible of theſe emotions, may attain a knowledge of the laws of compoſition, and acquainted with the difficulty attending the execution of laborious paſſages, may admire the art of the performer; but this admiration is perfectly diſtinct from the emotion of taſte. To obtain this ſpecies of applauſe, is the ſole aim of a number of compoſers, whoſe ambition is amply gratified by the approbation of the vulgar many: but it is the man of real taſte alone, who, either in his compoſitions or perform-

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ance, can excite the emotions of ſublimity or beauty.

That the number is ſo few, will not be matter of ſurprize, when we reflect that the perſon who would call forth the emotions of taſte, either in the diſpoſition of material objects, or in *any* of the fine arts, muſt be capable of entering into all thoſe aſſociations that are connected with the tones of mind which he wiſhes to produce. Whatever rudely breaks theſe trains of ideas, utterly deſtroys the effect. Every perſon of taſte, who has heard the Meſſiah of Handel performed at Weſtminſter-Abbey, and at the Play-Houſe, muſt be ſenſible of the advantage with which this ſublime compoſition was heard at the former place, where every object tended to produce aſſociations in uniſon with the tone of the performance. At the Play-Houſe, theſe aſſociations were forcibly broken, trains of diſcordant ideas obtruded themſelves on the mind, and thus the effect was loſt.

Why

Why is our church-muſic in general ſo poor, ſo deficient in ſublime expreſſion, and ſo ill calculated to produce the ſublimity of devotional ſentiment? Why, but becauſe the ſublimity of devotional ſentiment was unknown to the compoſers. Had the muſical compoſitions of David happily been handed down to us, I make no doubt, we ſhould have in them examples of the elevated and ſublime in muſic, which would have harmonized with the tone of his own inimitable poetry. (F)

From the tenor of theſe obſervations, I hope it has been made clear, that a taſte for the fine arts can only be cultivated by the ſame means which muſt be employed to lay the foundation of taſte in general, viz. a careful improvement of all the intellectual faculties. If the conceptions have not been rendered clear and accurate, and the attention rouzed to give them conſtant employment, ſo as to lay in a large ſtock of ideas upon every ſubject; if the judgment has

has not been exerciſed upon the agreement and diſagreement of ideas; and if the powers of abſtraction and imagination have not been called forth; it is impoſſible that the emotions of taſte ſhould ever be experienced. It is not by conſtantly practiſing at a muſical inſtrument, or by handling the pencil, that taſte for painting or for muſic can poſſibly be acquired. But let the baſis of taſte be fixed, and then by rendering your pupils capable of the practical part of theſe accompliſhments, you enlarge the ſphere of their innocent enjoyments, and afford them the opportunity of communicating pleaſure to others.

The mother who is ſuperior to the chains of faſhion, and who is capable of taking an extenſive view of the probabilities of human life, as well as of weighing the talents of her children with accurate impartiality, will decide with wiſdom and preciſion on the value of thoſe accompliſhments which muſt inevitably be purchaſed

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at the expence of a large portion of time and attention. Does the mind appear deſtitute of that energy which is neceſſary to give a zeſt to the intellectual pleaſures, ſhe will readily perceive the advantage which may be derived to ſuch a mind, from having at all times the power of gratifying itſelf by an elegant and innocent amuſement. But if her children poſſeſs ſufficient intellectual vigour to find full employment from other ſources, ſhe will, perhaps content herſelf with cultivating in them that taſte for the fine arts in general, which will at all times enſure them the moſt exquiſite gratification.

To ſuch minds ſources of delight open on every ſide. Every ſcene in nature preſents ſome object calculated to call forth trains of ideas, which either intereſt the heart, or amuſe the fancy. But if the time in which the mind ought naturally to be employed in accumulating thoſe ideas, be devoted to acquiring a facility of execution

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at a muſical inſtrument, it is evident no ſuch ideas can be called forth. I once travelled four hundred miles in company with an accompliſhed young gentleman, who made, in the courſe of the journey, but one ſolitary obſervation, and that was called forth by an extenſive mooriſh fen, where he ſaid he was ſure there was abundance of ſnipes! Read the obſervations of St. Fond, on going over the ſame ground, and obſerve the rich variety of ideas preſented to the man of ſcience by objects which are to the vulgar eye barren of delight. Follow the elegant Gilpin through the ſame tour, and mark the emotions which the various ſcenery of natural landſcape excites in the mind of the man of taſte. Who that is capable of weighing the value of the mind's enjoyments in the ſcale of truth and reaſon, will not inſtantly perceive, how much the balance preponderates in favour of thoſe who have ſuch a rich variety of aſſocia-tions, when put in competition with the ſu-

perficially

perficially accompliſhed? Let ſcience and taſte unite in the ſame mind, and you prepare materials for a conſtant feaſt.

As painting is now become a faſhionable accompliſhment, little leſs generally cultivated than muſic, it may be expected that I ſhould make a few obſervations that may particularly apply to it. It is a ſubject on which I have no aſſiſtance from the writings of others; in what I ſay upon it I have, therefore, no guide but my own feelings and my own judgment, and in ſuch circumſtances it becomes me to expreſs myſelf with diffidence.

The pleaſure we receive from painting appears to be derived from two very unequal ſources. The firſt, and greateſt, is from the emotions of ſublimity or of beauty; which in painting, as in all other ſubjects, depend on the train of aſſociated ideas. The more perfect the work of the artiſt, the more perfect the emotion; which is ſo powerful in a mind of ſenſibility, that

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it muſt be permitted, in ſome degreee, to ſubſide, before we are capable of examining with minute attention the ſources from which it is derived. Theſe are various, as deſign, expreſſion, colouring, &c.; but if theſe were not in perfect harmony with each other, we may be aſſured the emotion of taſte would not be produced in any powerful degree.

The ſecond ſource of pleaſure in painting is the accuracy of imitation. This correſponds to the facility of execution in the muſical performer; both are ſources of a certain degree of admiration and ſurprize, but are equally diſtinct from the emotions of taſte. Where taſte has not been previouſly cultivated, painting will never advance beyond an imitative art; and as the happy imitation of nature depends upon vigorous conception, it cannot beexpected, that thoſe who have not had their conceptions exerciſed upon natural objects, can ever produce any imitations which will be worthy

worthy of even this inferior ſpecies of admiration. Maſters may, indeed, give them rules of perſpective, and teach them to daub on abundance of pretty colours with ſtriking effect; but if taſte be wanting, the leſſons of a Raphael will be thrown away. Examples, on the other hand, are not wanting to ſhew what progreſs in this delightful art may be made with little inſtruction from maſters, where real taſte is guided by judgment and warmed by a brilliant imagination. I have the pleaſure of knowing many ladies who ſo excel; but not one uncultivated mind is of the number.

Taſte in the form of ornamental decoration, whether in articles of dreſs or furniture, is ſo much under the influence of the tyrant *faſhion*, that it can no longer be ſtiled a ſimple emotion. Faſhion depends ſo evidently upon aſſociation, that it muſt be traced to that ſource by the leaſt reflecting mind; but the aſſociations to which it owes its wonderful aſcendancy, are merely

merely thoſe which connect the ideas of eſteem and admiration with the ſplendour of rank and elevated ſituation. The form of dreſs that is worn by thoſe we account patterns of gentility, is aſſociated with the ideas of reſpect and admiration, which we are accuſtomed to cheriſh towards thoſe of a certain rank; or with the ideas of a diſtinction ſtill more flattering, which conſtitutes the glory of gay and youthful beauty. When the ſame form of dreſs deſcends to the vulgar, the change that takes place in our aſſociations ſtrips it of its adventitious luſtre, and affixes to the very ſame object which had before called forth our admiration, ideas of meanneſs and contempt.

If the ſovereignty of faſhion be ſo abſolute, what uſe, you will ſay, is there in the cultivation of juſt and refined taſte, which cannot overturn her decrees?

Notwithſtanding the influence which faſhion has over our opinions, taſte has ſtill a very important part to act; and if true

true taſte (of which judgment is a neceſſary conſtituent) were properly cultivated, all the evils ariſing from the powerful influence of faſhion would be completely done away.

Taſte rejects whatever is incongruous; it requires fitneſs and harmony, and therefore taſte will always reject the affectation of ſingularity. It will always, for this reaſon, adopt the mode of the preſent faſhion; but it will adopt it under ſuch limitations, as are agreeable to its general principles. Wherever cultivated taſte prevails, one general ſentiment, whether of ſimplicity or magnificence, will pervade the ſcene. In the furniture of the houſe, in the economy of the table, the ſame predominant idea will be expreſſed; and every ornament will be rejected, that does not give additional force to the expreſſion. If inanimate objects can be ſo diſpoſed as to produce an undivided emotion, ſurely the decorations of the human form ought to be able to produce the ſame effect. There true taſte muſt revolt with

with inexpreſſible diſguſt from whatever does not perfectly harmonize with the character. Where purity, modeſty, and virtue, dwell in the heart, it is not taſte that will decorate the form with the fleering dreſs of the wanton.

A knowledge of the principles of taſte would teach our ſex to preſerve the appearance of modeſty at leaſt, even if the reality were wanting. In female beauty, I believe no one will deny, that ſoftneſs graced with dignity, modeſty, gentleneſs, and purity, are ideas that perfectly harmonize with the object. Let theſe aſſociations be broken by diſcordant images, and the emotion of beauty will be no longer felt.

"But," ſays Miſs Pert, "young men "are ſtrangers to the emotions of taſte; to "pleaſe them other aſſociations muſt be ex- "cited. By dreſſing in the ſtile of wo- "men of a certain deſcription, we call up "trains of ideas favourable to paſſion."

True, young woman; but know that ſhe who glories in this ſpecies of conqueſt,

degrades herſelf beneath the rank of thoſe ſhe imitates, and ſtands upon the brink of a precipice, with nothing but a little pride betwixt her and deſtruction. Few, however, very few of the numbers who adopt modes of dreſs highly incongruous with ſentiments of modeſty, are influenced by any other motive than the deſire of being in the very extreme of faſhion. The cultivation of taſte would modify this ſpecies of ambition in the young; and would lead thoſe who have arrived at the ſober autumn of life, to adopt that mode of decoration which harmonizes with the ſeaſon.(a)

The principles of which I have here given an imperfect ſketch, are of univerſal application. They extend not merely to the diſpoſition of material objects, but have an important connexion with moral conduct and behaviour. It is in theſe principles that the laws of propriety originate. From them they derive their authority; and the period in which faſhion gives

gives a ſanction to ſuch modes of conduct as the principles of taſte condemn, is the epoch of depravity.

It may now be expected, that I ſhould proceed to give ſome hints reſpecting the cultivation of taſte and imagination; I ſhall not, however, ſwell the ſize of my letter by laying down rules, which the foregoing inveſtigation muſt have rendered in ſome meaſure unneceſſary. I have endeavoured to prove, that unleſs we have aſſiduouſly cultivated the faculty of attention, and directed it to ſuch objects as may enlarge the ſtock of uſeful ideas; unleſs we have awakened the curioſity, invigorated the conceptions, and enlightened the judgment; we can have no hopes of introducing thoſe trains of thought which are the loftieſt exerciſe of imagination, or thoſe aſſociations which are the ſource of refined taſte.

Where the preliminary ſteps have been taken, and Nature has granted to the character a common ſhare of ſenſibility, the

preceptor

preceptor will find the cultivation of imagination an eaſy taſk. True taſte is more difficult of acquirement. But where the firſt faculties of the mind have been duly cultivated, and the pupil is then directed to ſuch ſubjects as are calculated to elevate the tone of feeling, and awaken the ſympathies of the human heart, there is no doubt that the principles of taſte will be underſtood, felt, and practiſed.

Should our efforts prove unſucceſsful, it is in the neglect of the early affections that we ſhall probably find the cauſe of our diſappointment. If we have ſuffered pride, ſelf-will, arrogance, hatred, envy, or any other malignant paſſion, to gain an aſcendancy in the diſpoſition, we need not expect that taſte will be either felt or cultivated. Its emotions were never known to the ſelfiſh; they harmonize with the moſt generous feelings of our nature, and ſeek alliance with all the virtues! Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

ABSTRACTION.

Different Modes of Reasoning.—Use of general Terms.—Generalization; its peculiar Advantages illustrated in a Variety of Instances.—Deficiency in the Power of Abstraction: its Consequences, &c.

THE ſubject upon which I am now to enter, has ſo ſeldom been addreſſed to any but the learned, and ſo ſeldom treated of, but in the abſtruſe language of metaphyſicians, that to render it familiar to ſuch as have never been accuſtomed to read, to converſe, or to think upon the operations of the human mind, may be not a little difficult. I am, however, encouraged to hope, that the difficulty is not altogether

inſurmountable, being fully perſuaded, that many who never heard the term ABSTRACTION made uſe of, except where it was meant to denote abſence of mind, are, nevertheleſs, poſſeſſed of the faculty, and capable of employing it to the beſt purpoſes. Such readers may, perhaps, be as much ſurprized to find themſelves in the number of abſtract reaſoners, as a certain good lady was, on obtaining from a friend an explanation of the word *proſe*. "Bleſs "me!" cried ſhe in great aſtoniſhment, "is it poſſible that I have been talking "proſe all my life, without knowing it!"

If a few have been in the habit of reaſoning without knowing it, it is probable, that a ſtill greater number may have been led into an oppoſite error, and been accuſtomed to conſider that as reaſoning, which in fact, was nothing but aſſertion. It is by reflection only, that we can be made to perceive the difference: and if the conductors of education are not capable of this reflection,

tion, it is not to be expected that the reasoning powers of the pupils will ever be properly or effectually cultivated.

In treating this important subject, I shall, in the first place, endeavour to distinguish betwixt that exercise of reasoning which is confined to particulars, and which is in reality only another mode of exercising the faculty of judgment; and those more general reasonings, which include the exercise of Abstraction. I shall then attempt to explain the use and the advantages of generalizing; and having stated and examined the objections which may be made to the cultivation of this faculty in our own sex, and shewn it to be essentially necessary in the conduct of life, I shall conclude, by offering such hints as may suggest themselves for its improvement.

Though the terms Judgment and Reason are frequently applied indiscriminately in familiar conversation, we must endeavour to keep their appropriate signification in mind,

mind, in order to have a diſtinct notion of their ſeveral operations.

We have already ſeen, that it is the province of Judgment to decide on the truth or falſhood of ſingle propoſitions. From one or more of theſe judgments, Reaſon deduces a conſequence or argument: which muſt partake of the nature of the judgments. If theſe have been juſt and accurate, the argument deduced from them muſt be convincing: if the judgments have been erroneous, the inference muſt be falſe. Reaſoning has, by a learned and reſpected Author, who evinces all its powers,* been termed, "*the Arithmetic of Words*," and by this happy illuſtration, a more diſtinct idea of its operations is conveyed, than by the moſt voluminous explanations I have ever met with. To thoſe who have never conſidered the ſubject, an example may not, however, be altogether unneceſſary. I ſhall take it from the ableſt of lo-

* Rev. Dr. Gregory.

gicians,

gicians, St. Paul; and beg you to turn to the account that is given in the Acts of the Apoſtles of his addreſs to the Athenians. When brought before the moſt celebrated tribunal of antiquity, to anſwer to the accuſation that was made againſt him, of being a worſhipper of ſtrange Gods, obſerve with what exquiſite judgment he manages his defence! All the arguments he makes uſe of, are obvious deductions from a ſeries of judgments, the truth of which were every one acknowledged by his opponents, who, therefore, heard him with patience, and probably with admiration, until he came to ſpeak of the reſurrection from the dead; which appearing to their uninformed or prejudiced minds in the light of an unſupported aſſertion, was not acknowledged by the multitude to be a juſt inference from the antecedent propoſitions. But though "ſome mocked," and others ſaid, "we will hear thee again on this "matter," nevertheleſs, "certain men

"clave

"clave unto him and believed." An excellent account of the reception which juſt reaſoning, when it oppoſes the paſſions and prejudices of mankind, is deſtined to meet with from the world!

If one error in the judgments from which we reaſon, has a like influence upon our deductions as the miſtake of a ſingle figure has in caſting up a ſum, it follows, that the cultivation of judgment ought as certainly to precede that of reaſoning, as the knowledge of figures ought to precede the attempt at addition. I ſhould rejoice in being convinced, that it never happened otherwiſe in education; and that parents never deceived themſelves into the belief, that their children deduced ſenſible inferences from propoſitions, which, ſo far from aſſenting to, they did not even underſtand.

If ſound judgment be eſſential to that ſpecies of reaſoning which is confined to particulars, it is ſtill more ſo, when the mind, loſing the conſideration of particulars, enters

enters into the wide field of general reaſoning. It is here that the faculty of abſtraction comes into exerciſe; for without abſtraction there could be no general reaſoning; and conſequently no general principles, nor comprehenſive views of the tendency of doctrine or of conduct.

Abſtraction, as defined by Mr. Locke, is "that power which the mind has of ſepa-"rating an idea from all other ideas that "accompanies it in his real exiſtence." Thus, for inſtance, colour always exiſts in company with ſomething coloured: but we can think and talk of the beauty of purple, or of lilac, without combining the idea of theſe colours with a bonnet or a ribbon: and when we think of the colour independantly of the body that is coloured, it is an exerciſe of abſtraction.

When we ſpeak of the duty of Man as an accountable agent, or a member of ſociety, we do not ſpeak of the duty of John, or Thomas, or any individual, but of *Man*, from

from an abſtract conſideration of his powers and ſituation. Here it is evident, that beſides the accuracy of the judgments from which we deduce our argument, much will depend upon the ideas we attach to the word *duty:* if theſe are juſt, appropriate, and comprehenſive, and our ideas of the powers which we attribute to man, as a ſpecies, be the ſame, our reaſonings will be juſt and true: but if we have inaccurate or erroneous ideas concerning either of the terms made uſe of, our reaſonings will be abſurd and inconcluſive. Thus we ſee, that as in every proceſs of abſtract reaſoning we muſt of neceſſity have the mind employed upon the conſideration of general terms, it is abſolutely neceſſary that the mind ſhould acquire clear, definite, and accurate conceptions of the meaning of words, without which requiſite preliminary we can neither reaſon, nor underſtand the reaſonings of others.

"The

"The claſſification of different objects "ſuppoſes a power of attending to ſome "of their qualities or attributes without "attending to the reſt, for no two ob- "jects are to be found without ſome ſpe- "cific difference; and no aſſortment or ar- "rangement can be formed among things "not perfectly alike, but by loſing ſight of "their diſtinguiſhing peculiarities, and li- "miting the attention to thoſe attributes "which belong to them in common."* That this power of attending to ſome general qualities characteriſtic of a ſpecies, ſo as to arrange all the individuals in which it is found into one diſtinct claſs, has been ſlowly and gradually attained by human reaſon, is obvious; as even with regard to thoſe objects with which they are moſt converſant, the generality of mankind have as yet very imperfect notions concerning it.

In the firſt ſtage of ſociety the poverty of language and of ideas probably afforded

* Elements of the Philoſophy of the Human Mind.

no

no other claſſification than the ſimple one of animate and inanimate. In the ſecond the animal creation would probably be divided into man and beaſt; by obſerving the varieties which diſtinguiſh the latter *genera*, a more exact claſſification would be produced, and to each ſpecies would be given the appropriate term, as bird, beaſt, fiſh, reptile, &c.* To theſe ruder claſſifications ſucceed the minute diviſions of the philoſopher, who, upon ſtrict inveſtigation, finds peculiar diſtinctions that invariably mark each tribe and family. To theſe he affixes a name, *a general term*, the definition of which being accurately known, gives to the naturaliſt a clear and diſtinct idea of the peculiar properties which characteriſe the ſpecies.

* This intermediate ſtage in the progreſs of claſſification ſeems to have been over-leaped in ſome places. In Scotland, though ſurely not unknown, it is ſeldom uſed by the vulgar, who ſtill adhere to the ancient diviſion of man and beaſt. A fiſherman calls a ſalmon a fine beaſt, and a good dame will tell you that her geeſe or chickens are as *bonny beasts* as you would wiſh to ſee.

Such

Such would naturally be the progreſs of knowledge, and ſuch it is obſerved to be in all its ſtages from the ſavage ſtate. And here we may remark, that in the account given us by Moſes of the ſtate of our firſt parents on their creation, the faculty of ABSTRACTION is repreſented as forming a diſtinguiſhing feature in the character of man, as he came from the hands of his great Creator. The capability of giving appropriate names to the animal creation was ſuch a proof of the poſſeſſion of this faculty, as unaſſiſted reaſon would not probably have thought of producing, eſpecially at a period when it is not to be ſuppoſed that the argument could be fully underſtood.

How much the knowledge of general terms abridges the labour of ſcientific reſearch, muſt, from the foregoing conſiderations, have been rendered ſufficiently evident. We muſt however remember, that a knowledge of general terms, though

a neceſſary

a neceſſary ſtep in the path of ſcience, is not ſcience itſelf. A ſkilful grammarian, and grammar is nothing but the claſſification of words, may make but a ſorry logician. He may be able to refer each word to its proper ſtation, as noun, verb, or prepoſition, and yet be incapable of writing one page of common ſenſe.

Although in the contemplation of every general term employed in any of the various branches of ſcience, the abſtract faculty muſt neceſſarily be engaged; yet in the contemplation of theſe, the mind ſtill receives ſome aſſiſtance from the ſenſible objects whoſe peculiar qualities the term is intended to denote.

" For each wide family *ſome ſingle birth*
" He ſets in view, th' impartial type of all
" Its brethren.—Then whate'er his eye
" In this diſcerns, his bold unerring tongue
" Pronounceth of the kindred, without bound,
" Without condition."*

* Akenſide.

So

So far the mind is certainly aſſiſted by the ſenſes, and without accurate perception and attention, could make no progreſs in ſcientific reſearch. But for the exerciſe of abſtraction another and a more extenſive field is given. To reſume the language of the poet:—

" Hitherto the powers
" Partake the reliſh of their native ſoil,
" Their parent earth. But know a nobler dower
" Their fire at birth decreed them; purer gifts
" From his own treaſure; forms which never deign'd
" In eyes or ears to dwell."
" Such is the throne which man for truth hath built
" Secure, unſhaken.—There he firſt conceives
" True being and an intellectual world,
" The ſame this hour as ever. Thence he deems
" Of his own lot: Above the painted ſhapes
" That fleeting move o'er this terreſtrial ſcene
" Looks up. Beyond the adamantine gates
" Of death expatiates. as his birth-right claims
" Inheritance in all the works of GOD,
" Prepares for endleſs time his plans of life,
" And counts the univerſe itſelf his home!"

Nor is it merely in the diſcovery, or in the contemplation, of moral truth, that

the faculty of abſtraction is neceſſary; it is abſolutely eſſential towards the proper and practical application of it; being no leſs uſeful in the direction of our conduct than in the formation of our opinions. In the deſcription of all the moral qualities, and of all the intellectual faculties of our nature, general terms are neceſſarily employed; nor can any train of reaſoning concerning any of theſe qualities or faculties be carried on, or even underſtood, till loſing ſight of particulars, we fix our minds upon the idea conveyed by the general term which is the ſubject of our conſideration. Thoſe ſubjects which can be treated of, without any reference to any of the individuals in whom the qualities or attributes under diſcuſſion are ſuppoſed to exiſt, are called general ſubjects. In treating theſe ſubjects, it may ſometimes be uſeful, for the purpoſe of illuſtration, to refer to individuals as examples; but it is by no means neceſſary; and the more the mind

can

can avoid the conſideration of particulars, the leſs liable will it be to be led aſtray by thoſe aſſociations, which, though unavoidably attached to individuals, are foreign from every ſubject of general reaſoning. Notwithſtanding this very forcible objection, I believe, that in order to render the preſent ſubject intelligible to ſome readers, an illuſtration may be neceſſary. I ſhall chooſe one that is perfectly familiar, and which, while it elucidates my preſent argument, may ſuggeſt hints for reflection that may not be altogether uſeleſs.

Let us ſuppoſe that patriotiſm is the ſubject of diſcuſſion, in an aſſembly where every perſon preſent, inſtead of a fixed attention to thoſe peculiar qualities which are properly ſignified by the general term patriotiſm, each in their own minds refers to ſome particular individual, with whoſe idea the term is aſſociated. It is eaſy to imagine what various and contradictory opinions will be advanced. One, perhaps, attaches

attaches to the term the idea of ſome turbulent demagogue, and claſſes it accordingly with ſedition, conſpiracy, and rebellion. Another connects it with the idea of an Epaminondas or an Ariſtides, and ſpeaks of it as a compendium of all the moral and ſocial virtues. A third, having got the ſimple definition of patriotiſm, as *the love of country*, conſiders the narrow, ſelfiſh, and unenlightened partiality which he indulges for the place of his nativity, as an infallible proof of his poſſeſſing all the patriotic virtues. Is it not evident, that if each of the above-mentioned diſputants had obtained a juſt and comprehenſive definition of the word patriotiſm, and kept that definition ſteadily in view, no difference of opinion could have ſubſiſted among them concerning its merit or utility?

By the explanation that has been given of the laws of aſſociation in ſeveral parts of theſe Letters, the impoſſibility of carrying on any juſt or comprehenſive train of reaſoning,

reaſoning, where the mind is perpetually referring to particulars, will clearly appear. Whenever our ideas concerning any moral quality or action are formed, not from an abſtract conſideration of the true nature of the quality or action under conſideration, but from the particular individuals who poſſeſs or practiſe them, a thouſand caſual aſſociations, unavoidably attached to theſe individuals, will bias our minds and pervert our judgments. Hence ariſe thoſe inconſiſtencies in opinion and conduct, which we ſo frequently meet with in perſons of good hearts and ardent imaginations, but who, from being incapable of general reaſoning, change their notions concerning vice and virtue, merit and demerit, as they are led by their paſſions and prejudices to condemn or to approve the actions of individuals. What in a favoured friend they extol to the ſkies as meritorious, they conſider in an adverſary as wicked and abominable. To every part of the conduct and to all the

the opinions of the perſon they love, they attach the ideas of right; and to the whole of the conduct and opinions of thoſe they hate, they attach the idea of wrong: the reſult of theſe falſe aſſociations on their own conduct we can be at no loſs to determine.

With another proof of the advantage that ariſes from an examination of general principles, I ſhall beg leave to trouble you.

In the concluſion of the Letter upon Attention, I gave a *general view* of the advantages to be derived from the religious obſervance of the ſabbath, which, if acceded to as being founded on juſt principles, and fixed in the mind, muſt inevitably become an undeviating principle of action. If, on the contrary, the obſervance of the ſeventh day has merely been enforced by the example of that ſociety in which we have ſpent our early years, it will be entirely dependant upon the principles of habit and aſſociation. Let the ſcene be changed, and new habits will be formed,

and

and new aſſociations will ariſe, which may probably make the obſervance of Sunday as a day devoted to religion, the ſubject of deriſion and contempt.

Let us accompany the perſon of confined and narrow views to a place of publick worſhip.

A ſermon is a diſcourſe in which ſome general principle is unfolded and inculcated. The reaſonings made uſe of muſt neceſſarily be abſtract, though the illuſtrations are taken from particulars. Every general principle is of univerſal application, therefore from every ſermon that is properly conſtructed, ſome practical inference ought to be derived. But how is one who is incapable of abſtraction, to comprehend the reaſonings, whoſe force depend ſolely on the ideas annexed to the general terms employed? Had the true and proper definition of the words temperance and righteouſneſs been unknown to Felix, or had he, during the Apoſtle's

diſcourſe,

diſcourſe, not kept the general meaning of theſe abſtract terms ſteadily in view, the deduction would not have made him tremble. We ſhould accordingly find, that on the perſon incapable of generalization, the ſcope and tenor of the preacher's reaſonings would be loſt. But not ſo the application: though not a word comes home to *ſelf*, there is ſtill a Mr. or a Mrs. Somebody whom it exactly fits!

Addiſon employs upon this ſubject much of that charming irony of which he was completely maſter. I dare ſay you recollect his account of the lady, who, on reading "The Whole Duty of Man," diſcovered, in the deſcription of thoſe vicious propenſities againſt which the pious author endeavours to guard his readers, the characters of moſt of her friends and neighbours; and by regularly recording the names upon the margin, converted a ſyſtem of chriſtian morality into a libel on the whole pariſh.

From

From the little pains that have hitherto been beſtowed on the mental cultivation of our ſex, it is not extraordinary that the powers of abſtraction and generalization ſhould be ſo very rarely met with among us. Happily in the ſphere in which it is moſt commonly our lot to move, they are not ſo indiſpenſably requiſite as ſound judgment, or what is called common ſenſe; but that the cultivation of the reaſoning powers would not be eminently advantageous, I can by no means admit, ſince we ſee daily inſtances of the deplorable conſequences of their deficiency.

Be not afraid, my good Friend, that I intend making ſpeculative philoſophers of your daughters. The duties of mankind in general, and of the ſex in particular, are active; and an ever-wakeful attention to the *minutiæ* of which they are compoſed, is abſolutely eſſential to their performance. Small coin is found neceſſary even in the richeſt ſtates; without it the *petit* detail

of

tranſactions of the day could not be carried on. But a man is not conſidered rich, whoſe ſtock conſiſts of ſixpences: though where his capital is of ſuch a nature as renders it impoſſible to be converted into ready ſpecie, his wealth is uſeleſs, and he may ſtarve in the midſt of plenty. Thus it is where the reaſoning powers are ſo entirely occupied by general and extenſive ſpeculation, as to prevent an attention to the leſſer, but more eſſential, concerns of common life. It is to obviate this misfortune, that I have ſo earneſtly urged the neceſſity of cultivating the power of Attention. Where a habit of quick and accurate attention to ſurrounding objects has been eſtabliſhed, there is little danger of the mind's being abſorbed by ſpeculation, in ſuch a manner as to incapacitate it for the performance of the active duties.

To ſuch as fill ſubordinate ſituations in ſociety, and whoſe wills are neceſſarily ſubjected to the wills of others, the capacity

city of exercising the faculty of judgment upon the ſimpleſt propoſitions may ſuffice to direct their conduct. But to ſuch as are placed in oppoſite circumſtances, who have not only to chooſe their own path, but to govern the wills and direct the conduct of others, a more extenſive exerciſe of reaſon is eſſential.

The ſituation of no two perſons is exactly ſimilar: when, therefore, thoſe opinions that influence our actions, are the reſult of our obſervations upon individuals merely, without any general reaſonings upon firſt principles, we muſt infallibly be expoſed to error. A few examples may be neceſſary to ſet this in a clear point of view.

Let us ſuppoſe a young man brought up to buſineſs; his attention ſolely occupied upon particulars; his views confined to promoting his own intereſt, and the intereſt of the individuals with whom by commercial ties he is connected. He ſucceeds; riſes to eminence; gets into power; and

has

has now the general commercial intereſts of the country committed to his care. Incapable of thoſe comprehenſive views which are the reſult of general reaſoning, he continues to argue by a reference to individuals; his arguments do not apply; by his partial notions he betrays the general intereſt; loſes his reputation, and ſinks into diſgrace.

Another young man, whoſe reaſoning powers have been equally confined, enters into the Church. He is zealous for the intereſts of his order; punctual in the obſervance of every preſcribed ceremony, and ſcandalized at the propoſed omiſſion of a ſingle ſentence; not from a ſtedfaſt belief of the truth which it contains, but merely becauſe he finds it ordered in the Rubric. If, inſtead of confining his ideas of the intereſts of religion to a few particulars, this young man had had his mind rendered capable of diſcerning the general intereſts of Chriſtianity; if, by contemplating the nature and conſequences of piety and devotion,

tion, he had obtained lively ideas of their importance to the happineſs of mankind; and by inveſtigating the nature of his peculiar duties, not merely as a member of this or that community or denomination of Chriſtians, but as an apoſtle of Chriſt; is it not evident, that his character would have been more perfect, he himſelf more uſeful in ſociety, and a brighter ornament to whatever church he belonged?

The ſame reaſoning may be exemplified in inſtances taken from every rank and profeſſion of men. Let us now ſee how it applies to our own ſex.

While a woman remains under the protection of her parents, ſhe is generally ſuppoſed to have little occaſion for the exerciſe of her own reaſon, as her firſt duty is a blind and implicit obedience to their will.* When ſhe is married, ſhe has ſtill leſs; as this blind and implicit obedience

* See the ſyſtem of Madame Genlis, as exemplified in the character of Adelade.

is

is then, even by ſolemn vow, transferred from the parents to the huſband.

My ſentiments upon filial obedience have been too fully explained, to leave any doubt concerning the reverence which I think due to the parental character. It is by habits of implicit obedience, that children muſt, as I conceive, be taught the ſubjection of ſelf-will, long before the powers of reaſon begin to operate: and by habits of obedience I believe it is, that they can only be preſerved from the many dangers attending youth and inexperience. But as life advances, and parental authority frequently oppoſes that which is impetuouſly urged by inclination, will the tribute of obedience be yielded without murmuring? Authority may be capricious; and againſt caprice, united with tyranny, judgment itſelf revolts. Confined to the examination of particulars, judgment weighs, and decides againſt the parental dictate. But abſtract reaſon takes up the queſtion upon other

other grounds; it conſiders trifles, not ſeparately, but in the aggregate; it weighs them, not one againſt another, but oppoſes them to the principles of duty, and to the preſervation of domeſtic peace, amity, and concord.

The child who is taught thus to reaſon and thus to act, while under the authority of a parent, will be prepared to fulfil the character of a parent with propriety. Capable of taking comprehenſive views of her own duty and intereſt, as well as of the duties and intereſts of her children, ſhe will never exert her prerogative in acts of petty tyranny, nor exact compliance with her will, merely to gratify caprice. It is the love of power which renders parents tenacious of authority, at a period when authority ſhould ceaſe. With children who have been properly educated, a parent who is capable of enlarged and comprehenſive views, will ſeldom have occaſion to exert it.

I have

I have already had occaſion to remark, that it is the ſtruggle for the gratification of ſelf-will which creates almoſt all the leſſer miſeries of life. By generalizing our ideas, theſe trifles, which are the moſt frequent cauſes of domeſtic contention, loſe their importance; ſelf-will becomes conſequently leſs concerned about them, and thus the moſt fruitful ſource of diſcontent is entirely cutoff.

The mind whoſe comprehenſive views of happineſs takes in the whole period of exiſtence, will not eaſily be diſturbed by thoſe little croſs accidents which ruffle the temper, and deſtroy the peace, of the frivolous and ſelfiſh: we accordingly find that thoſe who have moſt ſucceſsfully cultivated the faculty of abſtraction, are remarkable for ſerenity and compoſure. This ſuperiority to the events of life conſtituted the virtue of the Stoic ſchool. But there is this difference betwixt the philoſophy of the Stoic and the Chriſtian, that the former confined the views of the operation of circumſtances entirely

tirely to *self*; while the latter embraces the intereſts of others. The one annihilates the ſympathies and affections of the heart; the other regulates and improves them. The abſtract idea of happineſs produced in the Stoic apathy; in the Chriſtian, active benevolence.

That the cultivation of abſtract reaſoning, is conducive to ſocial and domeſtic happineſs, will appear ſtill more evident, when we conſider the conſequence of being able to take comprehenſive views of character.

The ſelfiſh and ſhort-ſighted live a life of perpetual warfare. Having but one ſtandard whereby to judge of every perſon, they are ſeldom ſatisfied; as they ſeldom meet with any who exactly tally with their idea of perfection. A caſual act of kindneſs from the vain or capricious excites in them expectations of ſteady friendſhip; and when theſe expectations are fruſtrated, they expreſs the bitterneſs of diſappointment! Truth, honour, integrity, and every virtue

of the heart, if not united with a certain ſpecies of courteſy, they deſpiſe; nor can they, even in their deareſt friends, overlook a blemiſh, though counterbalanced by a thouſand endearing and amiable qualities. Such is the inevitable conſequence of dwelling for ever upon particulars; nor can we, but by means of extenſive and general views of character, avoid diſappointment and diſguſt.

In order to enable us properly to appreciate the character of any individual, we muſt have cultivated all the intellectual powers; and obtained a perfect aſcendancy over all the ſelfiſh paſſions. Unleſs the attention be lively, and the conception vigorous, we can never enter into the aſſociations which give to character its form and colouring. To decide upon the tendency of actions and opinions, the judgment muſt be ſtrong; and to ſee all the parts at once, by which alone we can form any idea of their general tendency and congruity, we muſt

muſt be capable of generalization. Nor will all theſe faculties ſuffice, if we have not obtained ſuch a command over the affections of the heart, as ſhall prevent their interfering to bring in a falſe verdict. Were the neceſſity of theſe qualifications duly conſidered, it wouldt each us to pronounce with diffidence on the characters of others:---were they actually attained, it would put an end to inconſiſtency in our expectations.

Having got over the moſt difficult part of my undertaking, and, as I hope, ſucceeded in rendering the ſubject familiar to your mind, I ſhall for the preſent relieve you from the fatigue of attention, and reſerve the farther application of what has been advanced for another Letter.

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

ABSTRACTION.

Character of those who object to the Cultivation of the Reasoning Faculty in the Female Sex.—Other Objections stated and examined.—Means to be employed in preparing the Mind for the Exercise of Abstraction.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHERE a confined education, an injudicious culture of the intellectual faculties, or the purſuit of mean and grovelling objects, have rendered a man incapable of enlarged and elevated views, it is not ſurpriſing, that he ſhould contemn the powers

powers of general reaſoning, (eſpecially in our ſex;) as they give that manifeſt ſuperiority to the poſſeſſor, which pride muſt be pained to feel, and mortified to acknowledge.

The leſs the faculty of Abſtraction is cultivated, the leſs chance there is, that the mind will ever riſe ſuperior to the influence of early aſſociation. It is by taking an abſtract view of the real nature of things, that early prejudice can in any inſtance be conquered: and where the mind is incapable of ſuch views, we muſt expect that prejudice will continue to operate for ever.

Far, therefore, from being ſurpriſed at the mean notions entertained by men of narrow minds concerning the cultivation of the female underſtanding, we ſhould learn to expect ſuch ſentiments, as the inevitable conſequence of early prejudice and ſhallow intellect. Were this deeply impreſſed upon our ſex, it would prevent the miſery of diſappointment: as the woman who is capable of reaſoning, and unites herſelf

herſelf to a man of inferior capacity, in the vain hopes of obtaining an acknowledged aſcendancy, ſeldom fails to be convinced of her error, when it is too late to admit of remedy.

The advocate for the cultivation of female reaſon has other enemies to contend with, beſides thoſe of the above deſcription; enemies, who, as they uſe the poiſoned weapons of flattery, and ſeek to gain the paſſions over to their intereſt, are far more powerful adverſaries than the proud, the prejudiced, or the ignorant.

Where the paſſions have been cheriſhed rather than the affections, the qualities that excite emotion will be preferred to the virtues which command eſteem. Unfortunately for our ſex, reaſon, and its attendants, prudence and propriety, are diſcovered to be productive of aſſociations connected with no emotions ſave thoſe of complacency. No wonder, then, that the voluptuary, in whatever degree he may himſelf

himſelf poſſeſs the powers of intellect, ſhould be adverſe to female cultivation.

That the ſprightly prattle of unthinking folly ſhould ſometimes be found an agreeable relaxation, even to the philoſopher, we muſt be willing to admit: but whenever it is ſyſtematically preferred by a man of ſenſe, that man, however grave his deportment, or unblemiſhed his reputation, will, if he candidly examine his motives, find them influenced by paſſion. The emotions in which he delights, are not connected with delicacy of ſentiment, or elegance of taſte; and in his diſpoſition the ſelfiſh affections will be found to have obtained an aſcendancy over the ſocial.

It is for the ſake of the aſſociations it excites, and not for the eſteem it produces, that the melting ſoftneſs of fictitious ſenſibility has had ſo many admirers among the ſenſible part of mankind. The real virtues of modeſty, gentleneſs, and humility, produce ſentiments of eſteem and complacency;

complacency; but though in a mind of delicacy theſe ſentiments may touch the heart with emotions ſtill more tender, they cannot be expected to make much impreſſion, unleſs where theſe virtues are ſo thoroughly underſtood as to be properly appreciated. Not ſo with all the long *et cetera* of female weakneſſes. A dear creature crying for ſhe does not know why, or palpitating with terror at ſhe does not know what, excites, by her tears and her terrors, aſſociations of tenderneſs that produce emotions, which, though very foreign to thoſe of eſteem, are nearly allied to paſſion.

By thoſe who conſider ſuch emotions as ſuperior to every ſpecies of intellectual enjoyment, we may be aſſured the cultivation of intellect in our ſex will never be countenanced or encouraged. To the younger part of our ſex, they will deem ſuch cultivation to be injurious; and to the married woman, they contend that it is uſeleſs. But is it really ſo? Does it never happen, that a woman

a woman, from being incapable of taking a comprehenſive view of her own and her huſband's intereſts, unwittingly contributes to the ruin of both? Does no inconvenience ever ariſe from the purſuit of pleaſures, which reaſon would diſapprove? Do eager diſputes concerning trifles never throw a little mud into the perennial ſtream of matrimonial felicity? Let theſe queſtions be anſwered by experience, and whatever may be pronounced with regard to youth and beauty, the cultivation of the reaſoning powers will, to the married woman, be allowed not altogether unneceſſary.

Even as the miſtreſs of a family, how ſhould ſhe, who is incapable of forming a general view of cauſes and conſequences, arrange her plans in ſuch a manner as nicely to proportion her expences to her income? How is ſhe to direct the conduct of many individuals to the accompliſhment of one general end, who is incapable of forming a diſtinct idea of the end propoſed?

Oppreſſed

Oppreſſed by the labour of prying into particulars, ſhe will conſider herſelf as the very paragon of good houſewives; and after having been uſeleſsly buſy from morning till night, will wonder to find the reſult of all her pains

"Confuſion worſe confounded!"

I know not, indeed, whether the generalization of ideas be more requiſite to a miniſter of ſtate than to the miſtreſs of a family. How neceſſary it is to the former, has been diſplayed by the elegant and judicious author of the "Elements of the "Philoſophy of the Human Mind;" its uſe to the latter is a more becoming theme to the Author of this humble performance.

A large family is a complicated machine, compoſed of a great number of individual and ſubordinate parts. In order to conduct it properly, there muſt, in the firſt place, be a comprehenſive, *i. e.* a general, view of the effect deſired to be produced;

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in the next place, there muſt be an accurate conception of the powers of each ſeparate wheel, or individual agent, and a juſt notion of how it can be employed to the beſt advantage; and laſtly, a diſtinct view of how the whole is to be ſet in motion, ſo as moſt eaſily to produce the deſired effect. It ſhould ever be ſo conſtituted, that, like the ſilk-wheels at Derby, when any one part goes wrong, that part may be ſtopped and repaired, without arreſting the motion of the reſt. Now it is clear, that the direction of ſuch a machine depends upon too comprehenſive an arrangement of ideas, to be ever attained by an attention to particulars. This arrangement is the work of generalization. The miſtreſs of a family who is capable of it, does more in minutes than others effect in hours. It is worthy of your obſervation, that the management of a family, far from being an avocation of that mean and degrading nature, which, by ſome ill-adviſed advocates for the *rights* of our

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ſex it has been injudiciouſly repreſented, calls forth all the faculties of the mind which have paſſed in review before us. If there be a material deficiency in any of theſe faculties, it will never be in a wife's power, however much it may be in her inclination,

"Well-ordered home, man's beſt delight, to make."

It is well obſerved by Lavater, that "buſtle "is the effort of indolence." Where the miſtreſs of a family poſſeſſes quick perceptions, vigilant attention, accurate conceptions, ſound judgment, and the capability of general arrangement, buſtle will be unknown.

If the power of generalizing her ideas be eſſential to the woman who is ſtill bleſt with the directing counſel of parent or huſband, how much more ſo is it to her who is left in a ſtate of widowhood with a family, who look to her for ſupport and protection? In the management of their affairs, what can the poor orphans hope for from

from the conduct of one who can neither reaſon, nor underſtand reaſoning? Let the men who conſider imbecility as the chartered right of woman, ſay, how far a being that is incapable of extending her views beyond the ſilly gratification of the ſilly wiſh of the preſent moment, can be ſuppoſed adequate to the performance of a double duty! Even granting a more favourable ſuppoſition, and admitting that ſhe has that degree of judgment which can decide properly upon common affairs, if this judgment has only been exerciſed upon particulars, how will ſhe be capable of forming a proper eſtimate of the plans of conduct moſt likely to conduce to her family's intereſt and happineſs? Like a *tyro* at cheſs, ſhe is incapable of calculating beyond a ſingle move; and that move is prompted, not by a diſtinct view of the relative ſituation of all the pieces on the board, but by the temptation of winning an unguarded pawn. She takes the ſtep, exulting in her diſcernment;

ment; and, when too late, beholds a train of conſequences which were till then unſeen and unexpected; and deplores, as her unhappy fate, what was the natural reſult of her narrow views and untutored ſkill!

Alas! how many promiſing families have dwindled into inſignificance, or become the prey of vice, not from a want of the maternal tenderneſs, but from a deficiency in the maternal intellect? And who can tell to what the little girl, who now prattles by their ſide, may hereafter be deſtined? In the cultivation of her faculties the happineſs and proſperity of a numerous race may be involved. Is it by the light of imagination ſhe is to direct their courſe? Is cultivated taſte fully equal to the important taſk? Is it by muſick and by dancing that ſhe is to inſtil principles into their tender minds? Or is it all of theſe combined which will enable her to act her part on the the theatre of life with dignity and honour?

To a deficiency in the powers of general reaſoning muſt we aſcribe, not only the in-

judicious management of education, but the ſubſequent neglect of thoſe accompliſhments to which education has been ſolely directed. From the abſence of this faculty it rarely happens, that the acquirements of female youth are made ſubſervient to the pleaſure or ſolace of after-life. Languages being ſtudied merely as languages, accompliſhments attained becauſe they are accompliſhments, without any central point or ſpecific object, the young lady is no ſooner removed from ſchool, than her attention is completely eſtranged from purſuits, to which the whole of her time and attention had been hitherto devoted. Of the elements of taſte or ſcience in her poſſeſſion ſhe makes little uſe; they remain as detached pieces, iſolated fragments of an unfiniſhed fabric. They are not conſidered as foundations on which to build; nor are they applied to as reſources, with which to give intereſt and dignity to domeſtic retirement. If not occaſionally called forth by vanity,

vanity, they are conſidered as uſeleſs, are conſequently neglected, and at length forgotten. Happy they who are bleſt with parents, whoſe enlarged minds are capable of comprehenſive views! In their education there is nothing vague, deſultory, or unconnected. Every branch forms an integral part of a great whole; all tends to accompliſh one definite end. The acquirements of youth are thus rendered inſtrumental to the happineſs and uſefulneſs of after-life, and even the amuſements of childhood, by the trains of ideas they have introduced, made a ſource of enjoyment to age!

By the mother who is incapable of general and extenſive views, the education of neither ſex can be conducted with propriety; for by ſuch the effects of preſent conduct upon future happineſs can never be foreſeen. When you ſpeak to ſuch mothers on the ſubject of education, they agree with every thing you ſay. Ever ready to admit

admit the force of your arguments, and to coincide in your opinion concerning the vaſt importance of education, you exult in having convinced them, and expect to ſee an immediate change take place in the reprehenſible part of their conduct towards their children. But alas! your expectations are fruitleſs, your hopes are vain! Without the capability of generalizing their ideas, they cannot ſee the relation which every particular part bears to the whole: and therefore, though they admit your opinion upon the whole to be juſt and proper, they do not perceive how it concerns any particular point, and with the beſt intentions in the world, go on in their former track, nor give one glance towards the conſequences.

The conduct of theſe good ladies in this particular is exactly ſimilar to that of the chriſtian world in general with regard to religious principle. All acknowledge its excellent tendency upon the whole, though

few permit themſelves to judge of every practice according to its ſpirit. Superſtition and infidelity equally reſt upon particulars. The cloiſtered monk, who, in the days of ignorance, venerated the paring of a ſaint's nail, and ſought the favour of God by a life uſeleſs or injurious to man, had not views of religion more confined than thoſe of the ſceptic, who makes ſuch inſtances an argument againſt the truth of the Goſpel. It is in the want of thoſe comprehenſive ideas which embrace the ſpirit of the chriſtian doctrines, while the conceptions are employed on the adventitious circumſtances connected with it by aſſociation, that perſecution in all its degrees, and bigotry in all its branches, have had their ſource. And by views of education equally circumſcribed has the progreſs of the human mind been fettered, and the developement of its ſuperior faculties rendered ſo rare and uncommon, that the advantages attending it are ſeldom underſtood.

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With regard to the cultivation of abſtract reaſoning, it muſt indeed be confeſſed, that other objections have been ſtarted, which at firſt view appear of ſo ſerious a nature as to be not a little alarming; and as theſe objections have had weight with thoſe who are ſuperior to the illiberality of prejudice, they well deſerve our minute enquiry and anxious inveſtigation.

The moſt forcible argument produced againſt the cultivation of the reaſoning powers, is inferred from the conduct of individuals, which is ſuch as to authoriſe the aſſertion—*that thoſe who reaſon beſt, frequently act as if they had no reaſon at all.* Powerful as this argument may appear, it is not the only one urged againſt the utility of abſtraction; as every perſon converſant with ſcholaſtic diſputes can witneſs, that there is no doctrine however abſurd, no action however immoral, that abſtract reaſoning has not been employed to juſtify and enforce. Even the ingenuous and venerable

nerable Reid obſerves, that " when rea-
" ſoning is uſed to juſtify what a man has
" a ſtrong inclination to do, it will only
" ſerve to deceive himſelf and others; and
" that when a man can reaſon, his paſſions
" will reaſon, and they are the moſt cun-
" ning ſophiſts we meet with."

Inſtead of being appalled by theſe proofs of the inſufficiency of the reaſoning powers, I rejoice in the opportunity they afford me, of ſtill more amply elucidating the principle upon which I have all along proceeded, viz. the abſolute neceſſity of paying a due attention to the cultivation of the firſt faculties which appear in the human mind; and which, by the wiſe Author of nature, were evidently intended as the baſis of the ſucceeding faculties. That to a neglect of theſe primary faculties all the inſtances of the inutility of the reaſoning powers may be fairly traced, I am thoroughly convinced; for as ſoon ſhould I believe, that reſpiration injures the circulation of the blood, and

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that the heart would perform its office better, if the lungs were taken from the human body,—as that any of the mental faculties with which the Almighty has graciouſly endowed his intelligent offspring, were intended to be either uſeleſs or injurious!

Leaving the inſtances of miſconduct in the reaſoners of the other ſex to more able inveſtigators, I ſhall confine myſelf to a particular examination of thoſe popular and plauſible arguments, by which ſo many have unfortunately been convinced of the impropriety of cultivating the female underſtanding.

It has been obſerved, that women who have reaſoned upon ſubjects of abſtract ſpeculation with much ſkill, have ſhewn in their conduct neither judgment, nor propriety, nor a delicate ſenſe of moral rectitude: that they who have been moſt remarkable for talents, have not always been moſt remarkable for virtue: that genius has frequently led to error: and that females

males who have cultivated the higher powers of the underſtanding with moſt ſucceſs, have manifeſtly neglected the peculiar duties of their ſex and ſituation. It is moreover obſerved, that though men of talents and learning are generally modeſt in proportion to the ſuperiority of their attainments, vanity is commonly the companion of every ſpecies of ſuperiority in our ſex.

Heavy charges! humiliating picture of female imbecility! How ſhall I anſwer to my ſex for their exhibition? Believe me, my fair Friends, that could I, in analizing the inſtances which have been here brought forward, trace them to no other ſource than ſuch an inferiority in the intellectual powers as renders the attainment of the ſpeculative faculties incompatible with the exerciſe of the active duties, I have too much of the woman in me not to endeavour to keep our own ſecret. But if to a defective education all the errors alluded to may be fairly traced, I ſhall, inſtead of cenſure, hope to receive the meed of approbation.

Often does the ill-judging vanity and pride of parents lay the foundation of ſuch characters as have been above deſcribed. The over-educated and the un-educated are equally incapacitated from making a proper uſe of their faculties. The conceptions of the former having been ſtretched to embrace abſtract propoſitions, at a period when they ought to have been ſtrengthened on the objects of perception, become dull and languid as to thoſe objects; and the judgment having, like the conceptions, been exerciſed upon ſpeculative enquiry, before it had been improved upon ſimple propoſitions, has neither ſoundneſs nor vigour.

Parents may flatter themſelves, as much as they pleaſe, concerning the extraordinary progreſs of the child, whom they have anxiouſly endeavoured to render a phænomenon of ſcience or literature at an early period; but future experience will prove, that, wherever the higher faculties have been unnaturally called forth, before the earlier

earlier ones have acquired ſufficient ſtrength, the character will, upon the whole, be weak and imperfect. Where there are ſtrong powers of conception, imagination will, in children whoſe education is thus puſhed forward, exert an early influence; and often do the obſervations which paſs for reaſon in ſuch children, originate in no other ſource. Imagination becoming thus predominant will frequently uſurp the place of judgment in the proceſſes of reaſoning; and when reaſoning, which ought to be a ſeries of judgments, is thus converted into a ſeries of brilliant combinations, what can we expect as the reſult?

Imagination is of all the powers of the mind that which is moſt liable to the influence of paſſion. By paſſion, therefore, and by early aſſociation, will the abſtract reaſonings of perſons of uncultivated judgment be directed.

Where education has been injudiciouſly conducted, ſuch falſe aſſociations muſt of neceſſity

neceſſity take place, as have a manifeſt tendency not only to pervert the judgment, but to corrupt the heart. Theſe aſſociations create the pride of ſuperiority on account of acquirements, which ought only to be eſtimated according to their uſe. Whatever is not brilliant in talents or in conduct is deſpiſed, what is merely good and uſeful is held in contempt. Can it be ſuppoſed, that minds thus formed ſhould pay much attention to the duties of domeſtic life?

The ſame fundamental error in education renders the characters which are formed by it, prone to embrace opinions which are at variance with ſound principle. Whereever the imagination has been called forth, and judgment is ſuffered to lie dormant, the mind will be apt to be led aſtray by every brilliant novelty, however falſe or dangerous the doctrines to which it leads. To detect ſophiſtry is the province of judgment; and where judgment is weak, and imagination ſtrong, we may be certain

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that, inſtead of being detected, it will be cheriſhed andſ upported.(H) Hence the race of female free-thinkers; not one of whom, as far as my obſervation extends, have had their faculties regularly cultivated.

Even where the judgment has been exerciſed upon abſtract propoſitions with ſuch ſucceſs as to prevent its miſtaking ſophiſtry for truth, though the reaſonings may be juſt and accurate, the conduct may ſtill be ridiculous and abſurd. This may, at firſt view, appear paradoxical; but if you conſider what was ſaid upon the faculties of attention and conception, the problem will be quickly ſolved. Where thoſe faculties have been neglected, preſent objects will make no impreſſion; and an ever-wakeful attention to preſent objects is ſo eſſential towards the performance of every active duty, that without it there can be no propriety in behaviour, no regularity in conduct.

Where the conceptions are ſlow with regard to all but ſpeculative truths, there can be no knowledge of character; conſe-

quently the opinions of ſuch perſons, with regard to the merit or demerit of individuals, are founded, not on ſolid judgment, but on the airy baſis of imagination. Hence the ardent likings and capricious hatreds of perſons who boaſt no common ſhare of genius, but who are deſtitute of judgment. The likings of ſuch perſons we ſhall, however, find to be without affection, though their hatreds are not always free from malignity. It is in what may be called the leſſer ſympathies that affection has its ſource. Where there is no attention, theſe ſympathies can have no exiſtence; for to enter into the feelings and intereſts of others without lively attention and conception, is impoſſible. Thoſe who feel not ſympathy, can never be the objects of ſympathy; ſuch characters, therefore, may excite admiration, but they will never attract affection or eſteem.

The faculty of abſtraction, where the previous faculties have been regularly cultivated,

tivated, has a manifeſt tendency to allay the fervour of paſſion, and to control the impetuoſity of deſire. Far otherwiſe, however, will it be found to operate, where it is under the dominion of imagination; reaſon will then be enliſted in the ſervice of the paſſions, and employed to juſtify what ſound principle and ſober judgment muſt condemn. It might ſeem invidious to point out inſtances to illuſtrate the truth of this obſervation: but no one who has been converſant with the world, or with books, can fail to be acquainted with them.

The moſt important part of education is that which a man gives himſelf. But if the foundation of this ſelf-inſtruction has not been laid in the early cultivation of judgment, and the faculties which precede it, the ſelf-inſtructed will be liable to errors in opinions and in conduct. Where the ground is permitted to lie fallow, weeds will aſſuredly ſpring up. If care be not taken in our early years to give thoſe aſ-

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ſociations which are favourable to ſound principle and rational conduct, aſſociations may take place highly unfavourable to both.

The female who, after a deplorable deficiency of early education, poſſeſſes ſufficient energy to ſet about acquiring information for herſelf, labours under peculiar diſadvantages. She may devote her time to ſtudy, but if ſhe have not judgment to direct theſe ſtudies, pride and pedantry will be the probable reſult. A multiplicity of ideas without arrangement are, in reality, very uſeleſs to the poſſeſſor; yet ſuch is the inevitable conſequence of that deſultory reading, which by our ſex is ſo often miſtaken for knowledge. Nor does ſhe whoſe judgment is uncultivated gain much by confining her reſearches to one particular object; for by imagination will the value of that object infallibly be magnified, ſo as to render all others comparatively mean and inſignificant. Hence proceeds an ardent zeal concerning ſpeculative points of doctrine;

doctrine; a zeal which, it may be obſerved, increaſes in exact proportion as the point in queſtion is removed beyond thoſe boundaries which mark the ſphere of human knowledge. Frequently have I known the ſeeds of diſcord and animoſity ſown in private families by the ill-judging ardour with which ſuch points have been oppoſed and defended; but never did I know an enlarged and comprehenſive view of the doctrines and *ſpirit* of Chriſtianity bring forth other fruits than thoſe of peace and love. By the union of judgment and generalization theſe comprehenſive views are produced; but by abſtraction without judgment, we have only an exaggerated view of the importance of thoſe points upon which the mind has, from ſome peculiar circumſtance, been led to dwell: no wonder that the duties of life ſhould be deſpiſed by thoſe whoſe attention is ſolely engroſſed by ſubjects from which they are quite remote.

The tendency of the cultivation of the ſuperior faculties to promote vanity in the

ſex, was the laſt of the objections ſtated. In order to oppoſe it, we need not change our ground; for never ſhall we find the reaſoning powers productive of vanity in a well-regulated mind. Where the judgment has been taught to appreciate the real value of every object of purſuit, and the idea of ſuperior excellence has been firmly aſſociated with the proper diſcharge of the religious, the moral, and the domeſtic duties; where the heart has been early taught to bow with reverence to virtue, however humble the garb in which it is found; and the conceptions enabled to enter into the characters and feelings of others; there the mind will be in no danger of being inflated with vanity, on account of a conſcious ſuperiority in the reaſoning powers. Perſons of this deſcription will, on the contrary, be often humbled by a conſcious ſenſe of their inferiority in point of real worth, when comparing themſelves with thoſe who boaſt not

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the ſame advantages. Such humiliation is ſalutary to the ſoul, and dangerous is the ſtate of thoſe who have never felt its influence!

In all the inſtances which have come under our conſideration, it is evidently not the cultivation of the reaſoning faculty, but a deficiency in the faculties of attention, conception, and judgment, which have occaſioned a departure from the path of duty and of common ſenſe. Though in theſe inſtances I have confined myſelf to my own ſex, the ſame argument will, doubtleſs, be found to apply with equal force to the other; ſpeculative men, who are incapable of conducting the common concerns of life, being little leſs frequently met with, than reaſoning women who are neglectful of its duties.

To thoſe who from an enlarged view of the advantages to be derived from the cultivation of the powers of abſtract and general reaſoning, are deſirous of laying the foundation

foundation of theſe powers in the minds of their children, the following hints may not be altogether unacceptable.

It has been ſuppoſed by ſome philoſo ſophers, that the vegetable mould which covers the greateſt part of the *terra firma* of our globe, carries in its boſom the ſeeds of all plants, flowers, &c. and that theſe, for the greater part, lie dormant only for want of proper *ſtimuli* to bring them forth. However this may be with regard to the vegetable world, we can have no doubt of the truth of the theory, when applied to the human mind; and were we to beſtow our attention in diſcovering the means that are beſt adapted for exciting its latent powers, inſtead of employing all our pains in rearing in it a few ſickly ſhrubs of our own planting, we ſhould be far more amply repaid for our labour. The faculty of abſtraction, like all the other powers of the mind, wants only the proper degree of excitation, in order to expand and become

productive. But it muſt be excited with caution, and by no means permitted to outgrow judgment, beneath whoſe ſhade it ought to be reared, nouriſhed, and brought to maturity.

From the explanation given of the uſe of general terms, the neceſſity of having clear and accurate conceptions of the meaning of words muſt have been rendered ſufficiently obvious. The definition of words ought to form a part of the daily occupation, from the time that the mind is capable of juſt and accurate conceptions. As the pupil advances in knowledge, exerciſes upon words that are nearly ſynonimous will be highly uſeful, and may be rendered very amuſing; and as, from the poverty of language, the ſame word is frequently uſed in a variety of ſenſes, it will be of infinite importance to have a ready and quick apprehenſion of the different meanings attached to every word. This can only be attained by conſtant exerciſe;

nor

nor can it be fully attained, till a large ſtock of ideas has been acquired; but if this exerciſe of the mind is begun at an early period, and unremittingly purſued, the number of ideas acquired from reading or converſation will be increaſed in an incalculable degree.

An accurate conception of the meaning of words, beſides increaſing the number of ideas, is an excellent preſervative againſt thoſe falſe aſſociations which engender prejudice. Many are the bitter diſputes which an accurate knowledge of the aſſociations attached to the words made uſe of by either party, would effectually prevent. Let us ſuppoſe, that I had been accuſtomed, from a conſideration of its colour, to give to a carrion-crow the appellation of *black-bird*, while you gave the ſame appellation to the ſpecies of birds commonly ſo called. The properties of the blackbird become the ſubject of converſation; I mention its diſagreeable qualities

ties and hoarſe voice: you aver it to be one of the moſt melodious of the vernal choir. I ridicule your aſſertion: you deny mine. We call each other's veracity in queſtion; the diſpute gets warm, till it is at length decided by ſome ingenious friend, who points out the origin of our miſtake. . Here, indeed, the diſpute might at any time be ſettled by a reference to the object; but if, inſtead of the word blackbird, Religion, or Loyalty, or any other general term of equal importance, had become the ſubject of debate, it is plain, that while a ſhade of difference took place in the aſſociations attached to it, we never could come to an agreement.

Beſides an extenſive acquaintance with the various aſſociations attached to the ſame word, it is neceſſary that an extenſive knowledge of things ſhould be acquired by the young perſon whom we wiſh to have prepared for exerciſing the ſpeculative faculties to advantage.

Thoſe

Thoſe who enter upon general reaſoning with a ſtock of ideas derived from few ſources will, notwithſtanding the accuracy of the ideas they poſſeſs, be liable to many errors. Narrow as the ſphere of human knowledge is, it is too extenſive for the graſp of human intellect; yet ſo curiouſly interwoven are its various branches, ſo dependent on each other are all its parts, that none can be thoroughly underſtood without a comprehenſive view of the whole. This obſervation ought to be illuſtrated to young people in a variety of ways. It will be the beſt preſervative againſt that vanity and preſumption, which *a little learning* is ſo very apt to produce. It will likewiſe be a ſtimulus to the acquirement of ideas upon various ſubjects; and prevent the mind from over-rating the value of its own purſuits, or depreciating that of others.

What I have here advanced upon the neceſſity of acquiring a variety of ideas, may, upon a ſuperficial view, appear inconſiſtent

conſiſtent with what I formerly ſaid upon the inutility of deſultory reading. In the ideas I have expreſſed, there is, however, nothing irreconcileable. That mode of deſultory reading which I condemn, does not make ſufficient impreſſion to produce thoſe trains of thought which are favourable to arrangement; and without arrangement we ſhall only, by augmenting the number of ideas, augment confuſion. Thoſe who poſſeſs but a ſcanty wardrobe, may caſt the few things they have into an open drawer, where they will readily be found when occaſion calls for them; but if all ſorts of things are ſtuffed without order into the ſame place, in vain will you ſearch for the ſmaller and more delicate articles amid the cumbrous heap. Still, however, what you put into the drawer you will find in it. Not ſo with what is put into the mind; unleſs its contents are faſtened by the chain of aſſociation, they will either be entirely loſt or uſeleſs.

" Except

"Except ſome profeſſed ſcholars," ſays Mr. Gibbon in a letter to a young lady, "I have often obſerved, that women in "general read much more than men; but "for want of a plan, a method, a fixed "object, their reading is of little benefit "to themſelves or others." The obſervation of method in reading, ſo far from being unfavourable to the acquirement of a variety of ideas, is eſſential to it; and is therefore worthy of our ſerious attention.

The following illuſtration will ſerve to place this ſubject in a clear point of view. Suppoſing your pupil to be acquainted with the general outlines of ancient and modern hiſtory, and that it is wiſhed to give him or her a more particular knowledge of ſome one of the European ſtates; the firſt books you would naturally conſult are thoſe which treat of its origin; you then have recourſe to the authors who trace its progreſs through all the purifying conflicts it has ſuſtained, from barbariſm to refinement.

ment. But this knowledge of the ſucceſſion of public events in the order in which they occurred, would be of little avail, if not traced to thoſe hidden ſprings in which they had their ſource. Theſe are the paſſions, the opinions, and the prejudices, of the chief actors on the given theatre. To have clear ideas concerning theſe, there muſt, in the firſt place, be an adequate knowledge of the human mind; and in the ſecond, accurate conceptions of the views and aſſociations on which the opinions and prejudices deſcribed originated. Unleſs accurate ideas concerning theſe are obtained, the ſubject can never be thoroughly underſtood. Nor will a diſtinct conception of the moral cauſes of events be ſufficient for our purpoſe; to theſe muſt be added adequate ideas of the phyſical. The relative ſituation of the country, its geographical and natural diviſions, ſoil, climate, produce, &c. &c. muſt be known; or many of the events related will be unintelligible.

intelligible. Thus we ſee, that to obtain a perfect knowledge of any one country or diſtrict of the globe, a variety of books on different ſubjects muſt neceſſarily be conſulted. But while one object is kept in view, the ideas acquired, however various, will be ſo arranged as to be always uſeful; and the greater the number of theſe ideas, the better will the mind be enabled to take general and comprehenſive views on every part of the ſubject. Whoever enters the field of knowledge with his eyes fixed upon one object, and thinks to arrive at it, by reſolutely remaining blind to every other, will find that he has miſtaken his path; while he who has no fixed object in view, will wander in an everlaſting labyrinth of perplexity and confuſion.

As no accurate idea can be formed of any object which is only ſeen in one point of view, it follows, that the opinions formed from ſuch a partial knowledge, muſt ever be erroneous and ſuperficial.

Obſervation

Obſervation upon the opinions and aſſociations of others, as theſe are modified by ſituation and circumſtances, is ſuch an eſſential ſource of ideas, that perſons placed in circumſtances which afford no opportunities for this ſpecies of obſervation, muſt, of neceſſity, have a very limited fund. In order to make theſe obſervations effectually, the mind muſt be in full poſſeſſion of the primary faculties; and to enable it to draw juſt inferences from them, it muſt be capable of generalization. To perſons thus qualified, that ſtation in ſociety which affords the moſt extenſive views, is evidently the moſt advantageous. The higher and the lower walks of life are, in this point of view, attended with equal inconvenience; while thoſe who are placed on that happy iſthmus in ſociety, from which they can occaſionally make excurſions into either of the neighbouring countries, are alone bleſt with the opportunity of making juſt obſervations on the inhabitants of both. They ſee the confined views of every little circle;

they contemplate the effects of those various associations which characterize each separate class; and appreciating the value of their pursuits and enjoyments, according to the standard of reason, rejoice in the goodness of the Great Creator, who, while he implanted the desire of happiness in the human breast, taught imagination to seek for it in such a variety of objects.

Before your pupils enter upon speculative enquiry, it is above all things essential, that their judgment should be exercised in ascertaining the limits of human knowledge. All speculations concerning what is placed beyond the reach of the human faculties, ought to be avoided; for from them no possible advantage can be derived. They must ever end as they begin, in uncertainty and doubt: but far from being a harmless waste of time, they frequently excite the violence of prejudice and animosity.

I shall conclude with some observations from Doctor Isaac Watts, of the truth of which

which, I am qualified to judge from obſervation, though not in all reſpects from experience. He adviſes the pupil *to accuſtom himſelf to clear and diſtinct ideas, to evident propoſitions, to ſtrong and convincing arguments.* "Converſe much," he continues, "with thoſe friends, and thoſe "books, and thoſe parts of learning, where "you meet with the greateſt clearneſs of "thought and force of reaſoning. The "mathematical ſciences, and particularly "arithmetic, geometry, and mechanics, "abound with theſe advantages: and if "there were nothing valuable in them for "the uſes of human life, yet the very ſpe-"culative parts of this ſort of learning, "are well worth our ſtudy; for by perpe-"tual examples, they teach us to conceive "with clearneſs; to connect our ideas in "a train of dependence; to reaſon with "ſtrength and demonſtration, and to diſ-"tinguiſh between truth and falſhood. "Something of theſe ſciences ſhould be

"ſtudied

" ſtudied by every man who pretends to " learning, and that," as Mr. Locke expreſſes it, " *not ſo much to make us mathema-* " *ticians, as to make us reaſonable creatures.*

" The habit of *conceiving clearly*, of " of *judging juſtly*, and of *reaſoning well*, " is not to be attained merely by the happineſs of conſtitution, the brightneſs of " genius, or the beſt collection of logical " precepts. A coherent thinker, and a " ſtrict reaſoner, is not to be made at once " by a ſet of rules; any more than a good " painter or muſician may be formed ex- " tempore, by an excellent lecture on mu- " ſic or painting." This, like all our other habits, muſt be formed by *cuſtom* and *practice*. Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

REFLECTION.

Different Applications of the Term.—Sense in which it is at present used.—Advantages of Reflection.—Foundation of it to be laid in early Life.—Inutility of Reflection, when not exercised under the Influence of Religious Principle.—Illustrations.—Conclusion.

YOU know, my dear Friend, that by Reflection, in the popular ſenſe, nothing more is underſtood than a ſerious re-conſideration of any ſubject which has engaged our attention. By metaphyſicians, however, the term is applied in a ſtricter ſenſe, to denote that power which the mind has, of examining its own operations. Few perſons of education are deſtitute of Reflection

Reflection in the former application; but if we ſtrictly adhere to the latter meaning of the term, I am afraid, we ſhall find that the number of thoſe who are capable of exerciſing it, is extremely limited.

The exerciſe of Reflection implies the poſſeſſion of all the preceding faculties; and where any of theſe are defective, we need not expect that the mind will ever be brought to reflect upon its own operations: as to do ſo effectually, is the higheſt and moſt uſeful exertion of the intellectual powers. If this exerciſe of intellect be wanting, it is not the knowledge of all the ſciences, nor an acquaintance with all the branches of human learning, that will lead to true wiſdom. For this great purpoſe, an accurate knowledge of one's own heart is more eſſential than all the learning in the world. Deceit is the great vice of ſociety; but, I believe, few people practice ſo much of it upon others as upon themſelves; nor is it poſſible, that ſelf-deceit

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can be avoided by any other means than the frequent exerciſe of Reflection.

Though Reflection is the laſt of the powers of the human mind in the order of appearance; yet, like all the other faculties, it will certainly ſpring by a proper preparation of the ſoil. It was to pave the way for its production that in treating of the cultivation of the heart, I ſo ſtrongly recommended a frequent appeal to the feelings, in the conduct of children towards each other. By this they are early taught to bring things home to their own boſoms, and to ſee every part of their conduct in the light in which it is viewed by others. It is thus, that the feelings and affections of the heart may be made to aſſiſt and ſtrengthen the opening judgment, inſtead of miſleading and perverting it. It is thus, too, that the conceptions concerning the judgment of others upon our own conduct may beſt be improved. And whenever this preliminary ſtep has been neglect-

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ed, I believe the cultivation of Reflection will become difficult, if not impoſſible.

Thoſe who are leaſt accuſtomed to reflect upon the operations of their own minds, will ever be found moſt forward to judge with ſeverity of others. Who are the evil ſpeakers? Who are the retailers of petty ſcandal? Are they not thoſe who never caſt a thought on the motives by which they themſelves are governed? The knowledge of one's own mind will ever bring ſuch a ſenſe of the imperfection of its various faculties, and of the impoſitions to which they have been liable, from the influence of paſſion and prejudice, that candour muſt be the inevitable reſult. To this ſalutary exerciſe of the power of reflection, pride and ſelfiſhneſs oppoſe ſuch inſurmountable obſtacles, that wherever they predominate, it can never be expected to take place. By Him who "knew "what was in Man," and whoſe doctrines tend to bring all his various powers and

faculties to the higheſt perfection of which they are ſuſceptible, pride and ſelfiſhneſs were therefore condemned in all their branches; and in order to deſtroy their influence in the human heart, ſelf-examination (which is nothing but a mode of exerciſing the power of reflection) was enjoined as an eſſential duty. Here we have another ſtriking inſtance of the conſonance of the inſtitutions of the Goſpel with the firſt principles of the philoſophy of the human mind. It is by this ſelf-examination that we are commanded to prepare ourſelves for the moſt ſolemn ceremony of our religion; by it alone we can come at a knowledge of the governing motives of our conduct, which on that ſolemn occaſion we are to try by no capricious ſtandard. Love to God, and unconditional benevolence to man, with all their correſpondent deſires and affections, are the unerring rules by which we are to judge of the ſtate of our hearts, and the complexion

ion of our actions. On this account I cannot but conſider the frequent repetition of the duty above alluded to, as a moſt efficacious means of cultivating the power of reflection, and of rendering the exerciſe of it habitual.*

I well know, that by making Religion the baſis of my theory, I ſhall expoſe myſelf to the deriſion of ſome minds, and the contempt of others: as all that I have advanced will, by certain perſons, be attributed to the prejudices of education. I can, however, aver, that they are not its *unexamined prejudices*; and that if I ſtill adhere to the old-faſhioned principles in which I was brought up, it is not without

* How little the forms of confeſſion, which are often put into the hands of young people upon this occaſion, are calculated to anſwer the end propoſed, muſt be obvious to every thinking mind. If inſtead of ſeeking to diſcover the hidden ſprings and ſources of their own actions, and judging of them as they appear in the ſight of God, they are taught to pronounce themſelves guilty of all manner of ſins in the lump, the heart will be little benefited by this religious duty.

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a liberal and candid examination of thoſe which others have embraced.

When I firſt began ſeriouſly to contemplate the operations of the human mind, I was far from being fully aware of the intimate connection which ſubſiſted betwixt theſe and the Divine commandments; nor had it ever occurred to me how very eminently the one was adapted to the other. In vain did I endeavour to find in any other ſyſtem a perfect conformity with the human character, in all its various modifications. Other ſyſtems applied to particulars, that of the Goſpel alone I found to be of univerſal application; and when, with this view, I examined its contents, I in vain endeavoured to find one paſſage the ſpirit of which was not in uniſon with the theory of the human heart.

When the intellectual faculties became the ſubject of inveſtigation, I found, and confeſs I delighted in finding, that ſo far from being inimical to their higheſt cultivation,

vation, the ſacred volume afforded the greateſt aſſiſtance; while its doctrines held forth the moſt animating encouragement to the improvement of all the mental powers. Nor ought I to conceal, that the examination of the principles of the human mind gave, on the other hand, ſtrength to my faith, and confirmation to my belief in the divine origin of the ſacred oracles. (1)

I hope that after this candid declaration, none will accuſe me of prejudice, till they have thoroughly examined the tenor and tendency of the principles I have avowedly adopted; as if they decline this taſk, I think I am at full liberty to retort the charge of prejudice on them.

Let us now ſee, how far the advantage to be derived from the exerciſe of Reflection is increaſed or diminiſhed by religious principle.

I preſume it will on all hands be admitted, that whatever tends to augment the benevolent affections, and to deſtroy the influence

influence of the malevolent paſſions, has likewiſe a tendency to increaſe the happineſs of the individual and of ſociety. When a perſon, whoſe notions of moral obligation are founded on the ſelfiſh principle, takes a view of the operations of his own mind, and perceives the unworthineſs of the motives by which his beſt actions have been ſometimes influenced; when he is made ſenſible of the errors of his judgment, and the fallacy of his reaſon; what is the reſult? Inſtead of humbling himſelf before the Searcher of hearts, and imploring the Divine aſſiſtance, he looks round upon the world, and in the follies and the crimes of others, finds excuſe and conſolation. A ſenſe of his own weakneſs diminiſhes not the force of pride, or abates the arrogance of preſumption. If obliged to confeſs that ſome appear to act more wiſely or more virtuouſly than himſelf, it is to ſuperior cunning, or ſuperior good fortune, that he attributes the difference. The knowledge

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of his own motives produces ſuſpicion with regard to the motives of others. The conſciouſneſs of his own erroneous judgment begets ſcepticiſm with regard to their opinions. Theſe feelings and aſſociations are not of a nature to inſpire benevolence; they are, on the contrary, intimately allied to all the malignant and diſſocial paſſions.

Very different is the improvement that will be made by the man of religious principle, from the conſcientious exerciſe of the power of reflection. A ſenſe of the many inſtances in which he has been influenced by thoſe paſſions which it has been his endeavour to ſubdue, will beget contrition and humility: conſcious that his actions are known to the world, while his contrition and repentance are unknown to all, ſave God and his own heart, he will naturally ſuppoſe it to be the ſame with others, and will, accordingly, be inclined to pity rather than to cenſure. The difficulty he finds in keeping his good reſo-

lutions,

lutions, and in acting up to the calm deciſions of enlightened judgment, will lead him to reverence and eſteem thoſe whoſe conduct evinces a greater degree of energy and conſiſtency; while, at the ſame time, it will render him careful of attributing bad motives to all who are guilty of improper conduct. In tracing the ſource of his erroneous judgments, he will diſcover ſo many aſſociations originating in circumſtances over which he had little or no control, that he will view the prejudices of others with as much candour as he conſiders their actions. Never will the perſon who is capable of the exerciſe of philoſophical reflection, preſume to take the prerogative of *judgment* from the Moſt High: never will he arrogantly decide upon the acceptance or reprobation of a fellow mortal, on account of the ſpeculative opinions he may have embraced. Every emotion excited, every affection produced, by ſerious reflection, are (while reflection

flection is exercised under the impression of religious principle) of the benevolent class. Humility, diffidence, earnest desire of Divine assistance, hope towards God for future aid from a sense of former mercies, and love and gratitude springing from the same source, are each allied to benevolence. Wherever devotion produces affections of an opposite tendency, there, we may assure ourselves, reflection has been uncultivated.

In exact proportion as the power of reflection is enjoyed, shall we reap advantage from the cultivation of every other faculty. If incapable of applying our judgments respecting right or wrong to ourselves, we shall not be much the better for their accuracy. If we cultivate imagination so as to produce the most brilliant combinations, and are without the power of reflecting on their tendency, and from an examination of our own heart, discovering the emotions and dispositions which produced them, we may amuse ourselves by wandering in the flowery

flowery fields of fancy, but will never gather any of its precious fruits.

Without the exercise of reflection, the faculty of abstraction is a dangerous gift. If we are incapable of referring to our own consciousness for the truth of those opinions derived from general reasoning, we shall be liable to be imposed upon by sophistry; and be destitute of means to detect the imposition. Even in the cultivation of TASTE, it is impossible to proceed to any length without the exercise of reflection. Those who are destitute of this power never can be made to comprehend the principles upon which taste is founded. They, therefore, suppose the emotions of sublimity and beauty to be derived from some inherent instinct, as natural and as universal as that which assists us in distinguishing sweet from bitter. Nor without reflection upon the operations of their own minds, is it possible that they should see it in a different light.

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As a ſtill farther argument in favour of the cultivation of this power, it may, with propriety, be remarked, that without the aſſiſtance of reflection, we ſhall neither have "manners void of offence towards all men;" nor will any appear to have manners void of offence towards us. Perſons who are accuſtomed to take circumſcribed and narrow views upon every ſubject but their own importance, conſider every aberration from the line of conduct they preſcribe, as an intended inſult or manifeſt impropriety. They conſider that as diſreſpect, with which no idea of diſreſpect was aſſociated in the mind of the offending party. They conſtrue thoughtleſſneſs into inſolence; and neither make allowance for the levity of youth, nor the infirmity of age. Whatever is ſaid of them one note below the key of panegyric, is ſo offenſive as to be deemed unpardonable. The friend who points out an error, is accuſed of hatred and malignity. And here it may be obſerved, that to

thoſe who never examine their own hearts, the imputation of blame muſt neceſſarily be intolerable, becauſe they know not how far it may be juſt or unjuſt; and willing to impoſe upon themſelves, they revolt at the idea of being ſcrutinized by others. Hence the heart-burnings, jealouſies, and ſtrifes, which are, alas! ſo prevalent in the world.

Let us ſee how far the evils above-mentioned would be remedied or removed, by a more general exerciſe of the power of reflection.

When we reflect upon our notions of propriety or impropriety with reſpect to manners, we find them entirely dependent on aſſociation. In members of the ſame ſociety, the ſame aſſociations will doubtleſs take place, though modified by the diſpoſition and character of individuals. For this modification the perſon of reflection makes allowance, from the conviction that, from ſtronger aſſociations of propriety attached to certain forms, ſome lay a greater

ſtreſs

ſtreſs upon them than he does; he therefore concludes, that what he deems eſſential, others may conſider as indifferent. Conſcious that his own omiſſions are void of pride, inſolence, or malignity, he conſiders the omiſſions of others as equally blameleſs: or if he at any time perceive his feelings hurt by neglect, or wounded by improper treatment, inſtead of indulging in the bitterneſs of wrath, he takes a ſerious retroſpect of his own actions, and ſeverely ſcrutinizes his own conduct, leſt he too ſhould be guilty of inflicting a wound in the boſom of the innocent.

With regard to the judgments of the world, or of individuals, it is only the perſon of reflection that can be ſuperior to their influence. Without ſuch a perfect knowledge of ourſelves as enables us to appreciate with truth and preciſion the ſtrength of our faculties, and the merit of our conduct, we ſhall be liable to be elated with flattery on the one hand, or depreſſed by

by cenſure on the other. By reflection, and by reflection alone, can this knowledge of ourſelves ever be attained.

"When ſelf-eſteem, or others' adulation,
"Would cunningly perſuade us we were ſomething
"Above the common level of our kind,
"*'Tis this* gainſays the ſmooth-complexion'd flattery,
"And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are."*

Nor is a juſt acquaintance with ourſelves leſs neceſſary to prevent dejection when popular favour takes flight. Severely muſt thoſe, who have no other meaſure of their own worth but popular opinion, feel the loſs of that public applauſe on which they reſted! The perſon, on the contrary, who, under the impreſſion of religious principle, has exerciſed philoſophical reflection, will be alike ſuperior to popular applauſe or popular condemnation. He will make uſe of both as means of further improvement in virtue. Conſcious that in the former caſe his merits have, in many inſtances, been over-rated, the conſciouſ-

* Blair.

neſs

neſs will increaſe humility. And where his actions are miſrepreſented by calumny, or miſtaken by prejudice, he will rejoice that it is to miſtake and miſrepreſentation, and not to truth, that he owes his preſent loſs of favour. Or if, on a ſcrutiny of his motives, he does not find them blameleſs, far from feeling malignity towards thoſe who have anticipated him in the diſcovery, he will acknowledge his error, and thus have an opportunity of exerciſing ſome of the nobleſt and moſt heroic of the human virtues!

Thus, my Friend, it appears, that in all the circumſtances and ſituations in which an intelligent being can be placed, Reflection is eſſential towards the perfection of the human character. Thoſe who are aware of the conſequences attending its cultivation, will find abundant opportunities for laying the foundation of it in the minds of their pupils. Every obſervation on the actions of others, on the ways of Providence, or the events

of

of human life, may be rendered ſubſervient to the cultivation of reflection, by the care of a judicious inſtructor. If the advantages reſulting from reflection be kept perpetually in view, pains will be taken, even from the earlieſt period of life, to remove all obſtacles that might impede its progreſs. What theſe obſtacles are, I have, in the Letters on the Cultivation of the Heart, attempted to delineate. By their removal the path will be left open; but without the aſſiduous cultivation of all the intellectual faculties, it will never be trod. By deſtroying pride, ſelf-will, arrogance, and all the diſſocial and malevolent paſſions, and introducing aſſociations favourable to benevolence, we render the diſpoſition amiable; but let us remember, that to be amiable is not to be virtuous. Virtue conſiſts in the right direction that is given not only to the affections of the heart, but to the powers of the mind. It is not of a negative, but of a poſitive nature. It implies the

the proper employment not only of the moral but of the intellectual powers. Theſe the wiſdom of the Great Creator has ordained to a mutual dependence on each other, ſo that neither can be in any conſiderable degree improved, while the other is neglected. Where the feelings of benevolence are unknown, the exertions of the underſtanding will be circumſcribed by ſelfiſhneſs within narrow limits: and where the impulſes of the benevolent heart are not controlled and directed by judgment, they will be productive of only partial good, and may eventually lead to extenſive miſery.

As the theory I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh, with regard to the neceſſity of cultivating the various mental faculties in the order in which nature produced them in the human mind, and of laying the foundation of their cultivation, in watching over the aſſociations which affect the deſires and affections of the heart, muſt, if generally received, tend to produce a ſerious

alteration in the plan of modern education; I am prepared for the oppoſition by which it will probably be encountered.

Some, with that tone of falſe humility which contented ignorance, when united with pride, never fails to aſſume, will, perhaps, object to it as too perfect. "We "don't want to make philoſophers of our "children," ſay theſe good ladies; "and "as for intellectual faculties and ſuch ſtuff, "we know nothing about it, and are never "a bit the worſe. Our children are not "more ſpoiled, or leſs taken care of, than "the children of other people; and muſt "juſt take their chance as the children of "other people do. If we ſend them to "genteel ſchools that are well eſtabliſhed, "we do our duty."

Such arguments admit of no reply. But I am aware that objections may come from perſons of a ſuperior deſcription, who having ſet their hearts upon ſeeing their children excel in certain accompliſhments,

may

may be unwilling to be convinced, that they have not only over-rated the value of theſe acquirements, but have miſtaken the road to excellence, even with regard to the objects in queſtion.

In diſcuſſing the ſubject of Taſte, I endeavoured, by ſuch a ſlight inveſtigation of its principles as my limits would admit, to ſhew the impoſſibility of producing excellence in the fine arts without the cultivation of the previous faculties. The ſame reaſoning may be applied, with ſome modification, to all the ſciences, and to every branch of human knowledge. By much pains and inceſſant application you may make your child a linguiſt at an early age; you may likewiſe make him an hiſtorian, a botaniſt, a mineralogiſt, or what elſe you pleaſe: that is to ſay, you may, by means of perception, the only faculty that is then ripe, impreſs his memory with the words and terms belonging to theſe ſeveral branches of ſcience and literature. Satisfied

fied with his progreſs, you delight in finding his attention abſorbed in theſe purſuits, and fondly expect that when he arrives at maturity, he will give ſuch proofs of ſuperiority as ſhall at once enlighten and aſtoniſh the world.

Beware, I beſeech you, beware of encouraging hopes which muſt infallibly end in diſappointment! If at that period when the conceptions ought to have been invigorated by attention to ſurrounding objects, attention has been occupied elſewhere, the conceptions will become habitually weak and languid. And if by early and inceſſant application, you have deſtroyed that vivacity which is by nature intended to be inſtrumental in increaſing the flow of ideas in the youthful mind, the conceptions will not only be languid, but the ideas will be few. From languid conceptions and a ſmall number of ideas, what hopes can be entertained of the improvement of judgment? Your pupil has been buſied in learning

ing the reſult of other people's judgments, but how is he to decide on their truth or falſehood, if he has never been taught to exerciſe his own? When a perſon ſo educated arrives at maturity, he may be of uſe to others as a ſort of walking dictionary, an animated encyclopædia; but he will neither illumine the world by the bright fire of genius, nor ſtop the progreſs of vice by the energy of exalted virtue!

Reflection, which in its operation requires ſerioufneſs, is wiſely ordained by nature to be the laſt power that unfolds itſelf in the human mind. Nor does it begin to operate, till the ideas are numerous, and the judgment ſtrong. Where theſe preliminaries are enjoyed, reflection will not be found inimical to cheerfulneſs. It is the ſlow ſucceſſion of ideas which produces low-ſpirited liſtleſſneſs; and the inceſſant intruſion of the ſame train of ideas that produces melancholy. But where ſuch a perfect command has been obtained

over

over the power of attention, as to render the mind for ever alive to the paſſing ſcene, the ideas muſt neceſſarily be too numerous, and have too much variety, to admit of either of theſe conſequences. Where the languid and the abſent ſee nought but a joyleſs blank, the active mind finds ſources of improvement and delight. The former lives as on a deſert iſland, where he depends on foreign ſupplies for his exiſtence. The latter extracts from the ſurrounding ſcene an ample ſtore of nouriſhment; nor does the continual feaſt which nature ſpreads for the light heart and the ardent imagination, paſs unenjoyed; while habits of philoſophical arrangement and reflection renders his pleaſures not only harmleſs but wholeſome.

If the ſketch I have endeavoured to give of the human mind, be drawn from truth and nature, the abſurdity of attempting its partial cultivation by an inverſion of nature's laws, will be an obvious inference.

According

According to the plan which my feeble hand has attempted to delineate, it appears, that the vital parts of the corporeal frame are not more intimately connected, or more eſſentially dependent on each other, than the active and intellectual powers of the mind: and that as the muſcular ſtrength of a ſingle limb does not conſtitute bodily health or vigour; ſo neither does the capability of exerting a ſingle faculty, in however eminent a degree, give any title to mental ſuperiority.

In preſcribing for the diſeaſes of infancy he muſt be a bad phyſician who did not extend his views to the probable conſequences of his preſcriptions on his patient's future health; how much more blameworthy the perſon, who, in giving advice with regard to the human mind, limited the conſideration of conſequences to the contracted ſpan of the preſent life!

My views will, I truſt, be found to be more extenſive; they embrace a wider portion

portion of exiſtence. May thoſe who adopt them, find, to their bleſſed experience, that they lead to the path of GLORY, HONOUR, and IMMORTALITY! Adieu.

ADDITIONAL

ADDITIONAL

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

TO THE

SECOND VOLUME.

(B.) p. 38.

THE want of veracity, ſo juſtly and ſo often complained of, is always attributed to want of principle: but that it does not always proceed from an inclination to deceive, I have had frequent opportunities of obſerving. An inſtance which now occurs to my recollection, will ſerve as an example. It happened that the ſon of a neighbour of mine in the country had the misfortune to be bitten by a dog which belonged to a decent tradeſman in a neighbouring town. It was an object of much importance to aſcertain whether the dog (who was killed the

the moment after the accident) had ſhewn any ſymptoms of hydrophobia previous to that event. The ſervants and workmen belonging to the houſe were ſeparately examined upon the ſubject; but to no purpoſe, as no two of them agreed in any one point. Here no one had an intereſt to deceive, but, on the contrary, all were equally anxious to recollect the truth; yet ſo contradictory was their teſtimony with regard to the events of the day before, that it is highly probable the exact truth was told by none.

In Fielding's voyage to Liſbon, a circumſtance ſomewhat ſimilar to the above is related; and I make no doubt that occurrences of the ſame nature are in the recollection of many of my readers. Every ſuch example, if inveſtigated with accuracy and candour, will ſerve to confirm the truth of my theory reſpecting the fatal conſequences ariſing from neglecting the early cultivation of the faculties of Attention and Conception.

(c.) p. 68.

In the long and painful illneſſes with which I have been afflicted, I have had it in my power to make obſervations upon the effects of attention,

attention, which may have eſcaped far more penetrating and reflecting minds. That a violent fit of pain commonly abſorbs the whole attention, every one who has had any experience in that way, will readily confeſs; but if we are at all able to reflect upon the operation of our minds, during the feelings of extreme pain, we ſhall be convinced, that the attention we beſtow upon the pain, increaſes our perceptions even of the fainter ſenſations to ſuch a degree, as to render us inſenſible of the moment when the acuteneſs of pain begins to ſubſide; ſo that (eſpecially if we indulge in fretful or grievous lamentations) the pain muſt have been very conſiderably diminiſhed before we are willing to acknowledge, or are indeed conſcious of, its having been at all relieved.

By this it appears that attention prolongs the apparent exiſtence of pain; and it follows as a neceſſary conſequence, that where attention is called to another object, (as in the caſe of expected relief from ſome powerful agent) the minuter ſenſations will paſs unnoticed; and the cure be allowed to be effected from the moment that the pain had actually ſubſided. The ſlighter complaints to which delicate conſtitutions

tions and enfeebled minds are particularly ſubject, obey thoſe laws of attention in a remarkable manner. To a ſelfiſh attention to every ſlight ſenſation of uneaſineſs, they (many of them at leaſt) owe their very exiſtence: and no ſooner is the attention called to other objects, than they immediately diſappear.

" Limera's ſick; make haſte, the Doctor call—
" He comes, but where's his patient?—At the Ball!
" The Doctor ſtares: her woman curtſeys low,
" And cries, *My Lady, ſir, is always ſo,*
" *Diverſions put her malady to flight.*"

Does it not evidently follow, that to give the mind a command over the faculty of attention, is to leſſen not only the moral evils of life, but to ſhorten the duration of the phyſical? That it can preſerve the mind from the aſſault of ideal miſery, would be ſufficient argument for enforcing the cultivation of a power ſo precious; but when we conſider it as abridging the period of real ſuffering; when we reflect that, by this command over attention, we reſcue a conſiderable portion of our exiſtence from the dominion of evil, and reſtore to the mental powers that activity of which an attention to pain had

had deprived them; its advantages appear in ſtill more ſtriking light.

(D.) p. 150.

As a proof that the memory of Perception may be enjoyed in high perfection, where all the other faculties are defective, I ſhall beg leave to adduce the following inſtance, which I had in very early life from a venerable friend, who was then advanced in years, and had in youth been witneſs of the fact:—An ideot, ſo utterly deſtitute of the faculty of conception as never to be capable of acquiring the uſe of ſpeech, (though it did not appear that his organs, either of ſpeech or hearing, were at all defective) was for a great number of years confined to an apartment, where he was occaſionally viſited by his family and their friends. In this apartment ſtood a clock, to the ſtriking of which he evidently appeared very attentive, and it was the only ſign of attention which he ever diſplayed. Every time the clock ſtruck, he made a clucking noiſe with his tongue, imitative of the ſound; and this he continued to do as often as the hour returned. After ſtanding many years in the room with him, the clock was removed; when,

when, to the ſurprize of all, he continued as the hour came, to make exactly the ſame noiſe as he had learned to do from it. He was perfectly exact in the calculation of the time, and never miſſed an hour in the day or in the night: nor did he ever cluck one too many or one too few; but continued to the hour of his death to give the exact notice of the lapſe of time, without miſtake or variation.

(E.) p. 274.

Did a doubt remain concerning the utility of providing inſtruction for the poor; that doubt muſt give place to conviction, even in the minds of the prejudiced, on contemplating the two oppoſite portraits drawn of the peaſantry of Scotland, at the diſtance of little more than a century, by two diſtinguiſhed writers, whoſe ſketches are equally entitled to the praiſe of truth and accuracy. The firſt preſents ſuch a picture of poverty and profligacy, idleneſs and vice, that we are ſcarcely ſurprized at the concluſion of the enlightened author,* who ſaw no other remedy for the evil, but the revival

* Fletcher, of Salton.

of

of the deteſtable ſyſtem of domeſtic ſlavery. Such was the ſtate of the lower orders in Scotland in the ſeventeenth century, according to the authority of one who united the virtues of the patriot to the talents of the ſtateſman and the wiſdom of the philoſopher, and whoſe local knowledge of the ſubject leaves us no room to ſuſpect him of inaccuracy or miſrepreſentation. By the eſtabliſhment of pariſh-ſchools, this deplorable portrait of vice and miſery has been ſo happily and ſo completely reverſed, that did it not ſtand upon ſuch unqueſtionable authority as an original, it might well be conſidered as falſe or ſpurious. Let it be compared with the account of the Scottiſh peaſantry, drawn by the maſterly hand of the elegant and accompliſhed biographer of Robert Burns. Never were local manners more happily delineated: never were the effects of local circumſtances more juſtly diſplayed. As it is a ſubject upon which I am intimately converſant, I ſhould not do juſtice to a work from which I have received ſuch pleaſure and inſtruction, if I did not add, that in the "Remarks on the "character and condition of the Scottiſh pea-"ſantry," I have in vain endeavoured to diſcover

cover a ſingle inſtance, in which that elegant imagination of which the author is ſo evidently poſſeſſed, has been permitted to exaggerate or to ſoften a feature beyond the ſimple truth. In tracing the cauſes of thoſe ſtriking changes, which a ſingle century has produced on national character, Doctor Currie has not, perhaps, given all the weight to the influence of the clergy, and the happy effects of parochial reſidence, which the ſubject may ſeem to merit. Whoever has been preſent at the performance of the Baptiſmal ceremony at a country Kirk, and obſerved the earneſtneſs with which the moral and religious education of the child was enforced upon the parents; making a material part of that vow which they were then in the face of the congregation ſolemnly to take, cannot wonder at the zeal diſplayed by the lower orders in Scotland with regard to the education of their offspring. In the life of Burns, this paternal zeal is beautifully deſcribed: In the letter from his brother Gilbert to the Editor, its effects are powerfully illuſtrated.

(F.) p. 328.

I wiſh I could prevail on accompliſhed young ladies to conſider the effect that would be produced,

duced by the exertion of their musical talents in places of public worship. Why should Church be the only place in which they are ashamed to let their voices be heard? Is it, that they think none should join in the praise of GOD, but such as are paid for it? Is it the theme that is unworthy of their talents, or the *place* that is unfit for their exertion; or is the audience too mean to be indulged with hearing the delicious melody of their fine voices? The cultivation of true taste would, I think, teach the reverse of all this. Can songs of gratitude and praise proceed with more propriety from the lips of hirelings, than from those of youth and innocence, in the full enjoyment of life's best blessings? If uniting their voices to those of the assembled congregation in the house of GOD, be an act of humility; let it be remembered, that humility is a quality associated with all the feminine virtues, and that the expression of it must therefore be highly favourable to those associations, which produce the emotions of beauty.

(G.) p. 338.

If the principles of taste be such as they are here described; if fitness and congruity be con-

ſtituents in their eſſence; it is to be feared that the leaders of the *beau monde* are not yet many ſteps removed from barbariſm.

The falſe notions that have been entertained concerning Taſte, have in many reſpects been injurious to ſociety. By rendering the ſubject contemptible in the minds of the ſerious, they have prevented that inveſtigation of its principles which would have brought them into general notice, and rendered their application univerſal. It is from the want of this inveſtigation, that Taſte has been conſidered as altogether unconnected with the ſubject of morals, though a very little reflection would be ſufficient to point out their affinity. True Taſte would aſſociate ideas of eſteem and reſpect to all thoſe qualities which are eſtimable and reſpectable; from the neglect of its cultivation many of theſe qualities are held in contempt. What are the aſſociations which evidently prevail in the minds of the young and the gay, with reſpect to the virtues of modeſty, prudence, and temperance? Does it not obviouſly appear that ideas of glory are often attached to qualities directly oppoſite: and that ſuch dreſs and manners are adopted as may beſt

ſhew

ſhew the ſtrength of this aſſociation in the moſt glaring colours? To the eye of Taſte each ſeaſon of the year has its peculiar beauties: nor does the venerable oak, when fringed with the hoary ornaments of winter, afford a proſpect leſs various or delightful, than when decked in the moſt luxuriant foliage. Is, then, the winter of life connected with no aſſociations but thoſe of horror? This can never be the caſe, until ideas of contempt are aſſociated with ideas of wiſdom and experience; aſſociations which the cultivation of true taſte would effectually prevent. Suppoſe the perſon who wiſhes to improve on Nature's plan, ſhould apply to the artificial floriſt to deck the bare boughs of his ſpreading oak with ever-blooming roſes; would it not be ſoon diſcovered, that in deſerting Nature he had deſerted Taſte? It would be remembered, that the colouring of Nature, whether in the animate or inanimate creation, never fails to harmonize with the object: that her moſt beautiful hues are often tranſient, and excite a more lively emotion from that very circumſtance. I leave the application to your own ſagacity; and ſhould ſincerely rejoice, that the obſervations I have made, would lead to an examination of the principles on which they have been founded.

(H.) p. 394.

The Author of theſe Letters has, in a former publication, endeavoured to expoſe the conſequences of this exerciſe of the united powers of abſtraction and imagination, where judgment had been uncultivated. She is, however, apprehenſive, that many who have been amuſed with the fiction which ſhe at that time made the vehicle of her ſentiments, have failed in drawing the inferences from it, which it was her wiſh to have rendered obvious. The obſervations ſhe has had an opportunity of making upon this head, have furniſhed her with new arguments concerning the utility of abſtraction, and the fatal conſequences ariſing from the incapacity for generalization. Thoſe who are incapable of general reaſoning, think it impoſſible to draw genuine pictures of human character but from particulars. They are, therefore, for ever hunting after the originals from which ſuch pictures muſt, in their opinion, have inevitably been drawn; and thus they loſe the advantage that might have been derived from making proper inferences; while all their ideas of what is juſt and natural, being drawn from the

the ſame confined and narrow ſource, their criticiſms are equally unjuſt and imperfect.

(1.) p. 421.

The ſlow progreſs of the human mind in attaining abſtract ideas; appears to me as an irrefragable proof, that the notions of the Divinity obtained in the earlieſt ages by the Hebrew patriarchs could only have proceeded from Divine revelation. Without ſuch revelation, the abſtract ideas of the Deity that are to be found in the writings of Moſes and the prophets are entirely unaccountable, and far more miraculous, that is to ſay, much farther removed from the common courſe of events, than any of thoſe miracles which have been ſtumbling-blocks to the ſceptics. Let us ſtudy the tenor of our Saviour's addreſſes to the Jewiſh nation, and we ſhall find how ſtrongly he reproaches them, for having exchanged the pure and abſtract notions of the Divine attributes, for the low and groveling conceptions originating in the ſenſes. All the diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord have a tendency to lead the mind to form pure, *i. e.* abſtract ideas of virtue. Conforming himſelf

to

to the capacities of his auditors, he illuſtrates by familiar objects, but never fails to carry the mind beyond the narrow conceptions of the ſenſes into the regions of abſtract truth.

Of all the books that ever have been written, we ſhall find the Bible the moſt favourable to the improvement of the faculty of abſtraction. Experience proves the truth of the aſſertion. In countries where the knowledge of the Bible is denied to the laity, the conceptions of the Deity become mean and degrading. Unſupported by the abſtract ideas of his glorious attributes and perfections which the Bible furniſhes, the mind calls in the aid of ſenſible objects. Hence the worſhip of images and a thouſand ſuperſtitions, which chain down the mind to the conſideration of individuals, and by preventing the expanſion of the faculties in general reaſoning, retard the progreſſive improvement of the human race.

Philoſophy itſelf, when it proudly refuſes Divine aſſiſtance, flies on low and groveling wing. Let us compare the conceptions of ſome of our celebrated naturaliſts concerning the origin of things, with the ſublime ideas upon the ſame ſubject to be found in the book of Job and in the

the Pſalms. The reſter in ſecond cauſes follows in his reaſoning the method of the Indian, who, endeavouring to find ſomewhat whereon to reſt the vaſt fabric of the world, ſuppoſes it upheld by an elephant, while the elephant is ſupported by a tortoiſe! The other from contemplating the abſtract ideas of infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, exerted through infinite ſpace, beholds the ſolution of every difficulty in the agency of the Divine mind, and ſenſible of the circumſcribed limits of the human intellect, confeſſes that the knowledge of many things is removed beyond its graſp. I may be thought, in what I have here advanced, to have ſtepped a little beyond my own proper ſphere: but the breaſt that takes an intereſt in the happineſs and improvement of the human race, will be apt to loſe the conſideration of its own inſignificance in the more enlarged idea of being a part of the great whole.

FINIS.

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